

The Sitting: (after) If this is a Man
Joshua Leon
Ph.D.
School of Arts & Humanities
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Signature: 

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Abstract

How can we use lament as a space of criticality to open methods and conversations regarding reparative, restitutorial, resistance and peripheral histories? And once we have begun to work from this space how can lament enable us to remain and work *within [it]* articulating silences and absences found there? How can we then bring lament into contemporary art and writing practices and find new formulations for what lament can offer as a methodological approach within these fields?

Rooted in Primo Levi's memoir *If this is a Man* and the Jewish mourning ritual of the Shiva, this research project is built out of an ontology of Jewish thought before growing into a theory of the dispossessed and displaced. Producing an original embodied methodology known as lamentology, which takes the lament found in the shiva and proposes research and practice as an unfolding, continuous and on-going live event.

The central theories of this practice are structured around Derrida's notions of hospitality, the address and shibboleth, enfolding Irit Rogoff's concept of smuggling within this to consider what diasporic approaches to writing and artistic practice can be. In conjunction with this, notions of fugitivity are employed throughout the work employing Moten and Harney's theories to propose a reparative method that works for the past in the present. These concepts are brought into relation to Deleuze and Guattari's notion of minor literature, reframing the minor as operating beyond the field of literature under the terms of *the periphery* and *the unseen*.

The Sitting: (after) If this is a Man is an embodied project that entangles research and practice, through a concern for 'liveness'. The work functions between the fields of institutional critique, diaristic writing, poetics and the exhibition, through which theories on ontology, ethics, and deconstruction are encountered.

This practice displays itself by employing the date as a mechanism to allow different forms of written documents (poetic, essay, proposal, aphorism) to combine, producing an unfolding 'memoir on the move'. Through this labour materials and histories are found, encountered, examined, and experimented with. As such language becomes material, the form of the exhibition is called into question, conversations and exchanges become mediums, collecting is used as a method and the archive is readdressed as a poetic and gestural space. These practices and behaviours provide the fundamental framework for lamentology, situating its dissemination within art and writing contexts.

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2. *Joshua Leon, Invitation to Steal, 2019*
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10. *Joshua Leon, Letter from Abdul Conteh as proof of purchase and movement of funds 2022*
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Preamble

The Sitting: (after) If this is a Man was built out of the momentum of my master's thesis, *The Speaking Ear*. Which took as its framework psychoanalysis, theatre and memory studies. In that thesis I employed a fictional character, known as the lamenting male and explored the boundaries of the erotic and melancholic imagination. The text was written in five parts, aligning itself with the five stages of grief; denial, anger, depression, bargaining, acceptance. It was here that I first began to consider the lament that provides the fundamental inquiry of this research project. *The Speaking Ear* focused on shame, particularly male shame, as a form, constructing long monologues which were intended to be read aloud as performances. This expression was upheld by in-depth research into the works of Freud, Lacan, Klein and Irigaray, exploring these psychoanalysts works in the footnotes. The form of the thesis was a theatrical monologue accompanied by the analyst's notes. It was, and is, a body of work that places the voice in the psychoanalyst's chair. Having completed this work, it felt pertinent to move on from psychoanalysis, envisaging a body of research that dived further into lament and went in search of a poetic, and philosophical voice. It is for this reason that the knowledge of psychoanalysis exists as a subdued entity in this research project. In a body of work that builds from a place of personal memoir it felt like a harsh reality to self-examine. The sofa was refused. Instead, the texts that follow are invitations and addresses. The role of psychoanalysis is an unquestionable influence upon my research, but in pursuing the lament, I found a new force, one that offered itself up as an act of creative writing and exhibition making. In many moments of this research project there is a sense of an implicit interaction, and affect, that is given room to work, and the work of psychoanalysis would have explained this out of existence. Holding onto this implicit touch was also bound to another desire, that of producing greater transparency within my practice. Such a desire was as much a political decision as a personal one. To quote a confidant, I didn't "want to explain things out of existence."

Prior to the production of this work, I had begun to feel a degree of exhaustion in subduing my Jewish identity. I became consumed by a desire to question and produce a complex embodiment of what I felt Jewishness is. The loss of my maternal grandparents also marked the end of a direct link to the events of pre and post holocaust stories and this too was shaping a need to understand the meaning of my Jewish roots. Simultaneously Britain decided to exit Europe, a project which had shaped and contextualised, in my family at least, a concrete proposal to protect people from the horrors that occurred between 1936-1945. As a British Jew, it felt that the loss of figures who had witnessed events of the holocaust was creating a vacuum, one that was now being asked to answer to questions of loss, be that the loss of the witness, or

the loss of a connection to the holocaust and pre-war tales of Jewish life. There was a sense that these voices' passing might also mean that our attitude to cultural remembrance would wane.

In some respects, the act of becoming transparent, for that is what this research project is, is an act of forming oneself, by speculating on how to find one's voice and reside in the vacuum of this history of loss. What is encountered in the act of becoming transparent is the impossibility to reconcile the void of loss. Within this void are sensations of melancholia and longing, and the force of joy and play of embodiment. In doing so, the intention was to work towards an exploration of my Jewish European voice. One that is prepared to both re-examine the past, thinking through history and the archive's ellipses and absences, and also prepared to efface this past with a subtle criticality and humour. Under these conditions, questions emerged regarding materiality, inheritances and most urgently the power of the text to articulate lament. You will note that the large proportion of the references in this text are either Jewish authors or other diasporic thinkers. This too is a means of situating and revealing the historical intellectual inheritances that defined my thinking. This body of work is an ontological exploration. My intention was not to define or reduce my own, or any others, Jewish identity, but rather to recover my subjectivity from its hiding place.

There is, of course, a complication within the work of transparency when it is situated within the lament, since the lament possesses a desire to hold onto the unsayable, or unknowable. And whilst one might consider transparency to be a task of revealing or making visible, this right to allow space for that which refuses to speak or be seen, was something I wanted to respect. In thinking through transparency, it was necessary to encounter the Black radical thinker Édouard Glissant's essay *For Opacity*. This seminal text details how the complexities of the self and the right to hold onto these complexities is one that must be made equal to all humans. And in many ways I agree with Glissant. I have always thought of this idea as an argument against reducing different identity positions into one central homogenising concept, rather, allowing for difference to express itself addressing their communities. However, early on in the text Glissant says "...difference itself can contrive to reduce things to the Transparent"¹ and I want to contest this. My approach to transparency is that of glass, whereby the intention is to be clear, to reveal, however when you look closely you appreciate its blemishes, its fragments, the gestures of the liquid nature of this material. My transparency is not opposed to Glissant's opacity, rather it suggests that within transparency there remain moments of opacity, and when faced with politics that reduce, one form of resistance is to use the transparency to say, "I cannot be hurt with that which I

¹ Édouard Glissant and Betsy Wing, *Poetics of Relation* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1997).

embody.” This expression became an original means of approaching lament. It is my contention that the lament is an act of transparency. Beyond grief, the lament in the proceeding document should be considered as articulations of resistance. These laments hold information that is coded by my subjectivity, which are only readable to those who know this code. Yet the intention is that the code is so abundant, that should you trace it, it would reveal itself to you. Such a codification can be read as form of obfuscation, or evasiveness, and at times I ask that you sit with this, accepting that it is my right to embody my complexity as such, and that it too is not counterintuitive to transparency. Rather what is being articulated is the way in which a certain transparency still possesses a poetic potential and that this potential can obfuscate without harm.

These themes, *transparency*, *Jewishness*, *melancholia*, *inheritance*, *subjectivity* and *lament* are the impetus that lead to this research project. The challenge was finding the right forms and methods to hold these different subjects together. It felt urgent that the research and work was given license to move through moods, both as a means for challenging the craft of my writing, which is my practice, and to handle the subjects that were being encountered in the research. This project is consumed by a desire to craft the sentence, as much as it is to translate language into material. In searching for these forms I dived into Jewish rituals seeking something that could offer me the room to write in different tones.

Soon enough I found myself at the Shiva, the Jewish mourning ritual. A seven day process during which each day is re-prepared as the day before, while the family who mourn await those who wish to visit them. It had come to me through the memory of sitting shiva with my mum for my grandfather. Each day, my duty was to assist in the preparing of the flat, making plates of food, drinks, set the table, start the conversation and so on. I considered this idea of constant renewal and maintenance to be an ideal setting for my method. It enabled lament to be grounded in all its multivarious productions, displaying itself as forms of fragmentary conversations, and allowing for the work of personal interjection to entangle with philosophical reflection, while the poetic voice could bind itself to the essayistic. Further still, the shiva appeared as a way of conceiving of exhibitions. It is structurally, a display. And as part of the practice of this research it was important to consider how the written word could produce exhibitions and how exhibitions can speak back to the written word. The desire to entangle, much like the desire for transparency was held tightly in the metaphor of the shiva.

Blending so many tones in one space became a key task of this project, and of my practice. This tonal shifting made space for the appearances of what you might call ghostly occurrences to happen in the text. Throughout you will find

interactions with my family, or former partner, or friends, and most notably to the historically lost. Take the poem *Amit's Question*, which is a poem about a conversation with a lost family friend or the work of repairing the glass. These are both designed to speak to ghosts. They also register the making transparent of my code.

The lament I work with is one that encourages these different forms to co-mingle. This too is politically designed. It speaks of the complexity I wish to inhabit and embody. Treating my Jewishness as an identity in solidarity with other dispossessed voices, allowing other voices to enter into my thinking. Such an ambition is most notable with the constant emergence of the words of Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish. The distinct specificity of his work, as a man in exile from his homeland, and his relation to diaspora and its affective and material intimacies, spoke to this diasporic universality. In working with this material, I entered into conversation with a history of diaspora beyond the limits of my own identity position.

These conversations are equally important in an interaction with the work of institutional critique. In particular I draw from the feminist practices of Andrea Fraser, Laurie Parsons and Eva Barto. In many ways this interaction is also an interaction with their transparency. Fraser, putting her body on the line to speak of the inherent violence enacted on the female body throughout art history. And her detailed and extensive work within the institution to unpack its systems of power and oppression. Parsons practice offering up the potential for care, be it for the self, others, the staff, or a site, bringing it into the consideration of artistic practice. This felt especially relevant to the shiva. While Barto's work continues to make us reconsider labour and its exploitations in the contemporary field, and how one's labour can be refused as a form of resistance. This interaction with institutional critique as a feminist form is also an acknowledgment to the urgent and important work of these, as well as many other, female artists who have contributed to art history and to whom my practice is indebted.

These formal problems are what Lamentology, the original methodology I created, intends to develop. Lamentology is a method of art practice that entangles literary form with exhibition making through an in-depth reflection of one's diasporic subjectivity, and is driven by a desire to understand how to address politically and poetically the force of lament held deep within.

What's in a box

This document works through silences, searching for lament. In this endeavour, a mode of working is developed that wishes to remain within the space of ghosts, memories, and history, to develop a criticality situated in writing and exhibitions that offers a means for articulating these silences, should they so wish. Central to this effort persist three questions: How can we use lament as a critical space to open methods and conversations regarding reparative, restitutive, resistance and peripheral histories and behaviours? And once we have begun this work, how can lament enable us to remain *within [it]* and continually articulate the silences and absences found through this criticality? How can we then bring lament into contemporary art and writing practices and find new formulations for what lament can offer as a methodological approach within these fields?

These questions have allowed this work to remain in contact with contemporary events, and to insist that the social politics of today have had an immediate effect on this document. What I have set out in this thesis is a desire to remain centrifugal (peripheral) as a concern for resisting the centripetal (nationalist) drives that are reappearing in Europe and further afield at this time.³ To achieve this, this document practices an embodied, live and unfolding method, inhabiting what Lauren Berlant calls 'intimate publics', that treats *living as practice* and produces an *autopoietic* born out of the direct sensation that [our] feeling[s] have been set in a constant state of crisis, and daily habits and rituals can articulate one's resistance and survival, developing work that is vulnerable, intimate and social.⁴ This liveness and intimate sociality lays the ground for this document to produce work *in-continuum*, a term which enables iterations of disseminations to feed into one another, produce each other, and create a relational body of ideas that trace a life of my body and other bodies (voices) as they pass through spaces and unfurl histories. In this mode of practice, I propose that the work of writing and exhibition are embodied, performative practices.

In a found document I received from my dead grandmother, titled

While you are in England,
HELPFUL INFORMATION
and Guidance
FOR EVERY REFUGEE

³ Dennis Marks, *Wandering Jew: The Search for Joseph Roth* (London: Notting Hill Editions, 2016), p. 130.

⁴ Lauren Gail Berlant, *Cruel Optimism* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2011), p. 62.

there is the following statement:

“If you are planning to make your permanent home overseas, regard this stay in England as a ‘mark time’ period during which you are preparing yourself for a new life. Do not expect to be received immediately in English homes, because the Englishman takes some time before he opens his home wide to strangers”

In this work I have taken this notion of “mark[ed] time” and inverted its intention. Such poetic inversions are central to the work taking place throughout this thesis, as inversion allows the space of criticality to remain open, like a wound, and to go in search of a means of repair and historical transparency that has been obscured.

Alaa Abd El-Fattah’s *You have not yet been Defeated*, selected texts written over a period of ten years, similarly embodies the poetic inversion of “mark[ed] time”. These texts work through the passage of time to articulate the struggle of Egyptians seeking liberation from consistent dictatorial regimes. For El-Fattah the years become a political time stamp marking the socio-political changes that constantly shift and change in Egypt, alongside his own constant incarceration and liberation for being a political dissident. The marking of time becomes a method of regarding Fattah’s acts of resistance against the regimes of power.⁵ Fattah’s text does not end, nor does his resistance, the date enables us to see how time shifts his feelings, his responses, and the situation he exists within. The date is how he grounds himself, situating his words in a space between memoir/diary, political protest, and essay, but also utilising the more immediate relation to contemporary outlets of social media, in particular Twitter. At the time of writing El-Fattah remains in prison, on partial hunger strike.⁶ Writing has been his outlet of connection with a public he cannot be within, the date allows him to mark the time he has spent absent from this public.

In this document I have employed the date in a similar manner, marking the unfolding of time *within* a public, but also, allowing the date to become a tool for speaking to sites and those who cannot attend. These dates are intended to cut into a politics of events happening in the contemporary that are in fact fractured and entangled with a past that consistently reappears as I [one]

⁵ Alaa Abd El-Fattah and Naomi Klein, *You Have Not Yet Been Defeated: Selected Writings 2011-2019* (London: Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2021).

⁶ 17/10/2022

reside[s] *within* and move[s] through time.⁷ Such a relation to the date intersects with Derrida's statement that:

“A date discerns and concerns a place, it is a *situation*. It can give place to calculation. But in the final account, it ceases to be calculable. The crypt ceases to be the result of a concealment, the work of a hermetic poet, one skilled at hiding or anxious to seduce with ciphers. A date fascinates, but it is not *made* to fascinate. The crypt takes place (it is a passion, not an action, of the poet) wherever a singular incision marks language. As one might engrave a date in a tree, burning the bark with ciphers of fire. But the voice of the poem carries beyond the singular cut. I mean by this that the cut becomes readable for certain of those who have no part in the event, or the constellation of events consigned to it, for those excluded from partaking, yet who may thus partake and impart.”⁸

As such the “mark[ed] time” that was used to install an inhospitable atmosphere for my grandmother, became the crypt (space) of critical and poetic inversion that allowed me to pursue a desire for a hospitable open space (publics/commons), where the stranger is invited to enter the work, and the date and time become a method of refusal focusing on existing in a disjointed, continuous and fractured logic that relates to personal and social history and the contemporary apparitions and encounters that result.⁹ The dates in this work borrow their style from WhatsApp, imitating a present and constant technology that held many relations within this work together.

As you can see, the lament I am working with is also contained in an inheritance of a personal history, which in this case is situated in being Jewish diaspora, and therefore of a *minor* position. As such, desires to remain in constant dialogue with one's arrival and subjectivity are a constant throughout this thesis, considering history as affect. This term '*minor*' is inherited from Deleuze and Guattari's short text, *Kafka: Towards a Minor Literature*, in which they propose that by writing in a major language (German) but being from a minority position (Jewish and Czech) Kafka created *minor literature*, which is the work of a minority figure within a majority space (centre).¹⁰ Gayatri Spivak later updated this asking, “*can the sub-altern speak?*” in her book of the same title,

⁷ Christina Sharpe, *In the Wake: On Blackness And Being*, Illustrated edition (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016).

⁸ Jacques Derrida, Thomas Dutoit, and Outi Pasanen, *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan* (Fordham University Press, 2005), p. 48.

⁹ *Between Deleuze and Derrida*, ed. by Paul Patton (London; New York: Continuum, 2003).

¹⁰ Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Theory and History of Literature, v. 30 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 16.

animating a question of post-colonial necessity.¹¹ You could say that, here, in this document, I am asking “how does the so-called “degenerate” speak? Thereby remaining with the ‘*minor*’ and the subaltern, for my personal story is situated in these lineages, and therefore I feel that I can speak to the ‘*minor*’ and that being ‘*minor*’ formulates my political, social, and historical position. *The minor* is the focus of my address. As you move through this work you will find the spectres of these *minors* and family everywhere, these figures are evoked and given space so that I can begin to formulate an answer to the questions; Who do I address? What does it mean to address?¹² And how do I allow ghosts to address?¹³ These questions leave one with a need to go in search of *the all but hidden*, or that which remains embedded in the subjects of history, fumbling through archives, stories, and traces.

In addressing the *minor* and being with their ghosts this text is scattered with mourning and melancholia, diving into Derrida as well as Fisher’s notion of hauntology, which is to say the work itself is haunted by “what once was, what could have been, and – most keenly – what could still happen.”^{14 15 16} To exist and work within this space, is to labour without the constant compulsion to explain things out of existence, but rather to live with them, to remain *within*, and formulate a practice that insists in being within the *of* and *with*. I have intentionally situated myself within the *of* and *with*, or what Derrida would call the space of *spectropoetics*, so that the traces of people are summoned, and that their summoning is produced through the work of text.¹⁷

Throughout the text these traces appear through materials as well as words: *glass, coffee, the broom, dust, cotton, food, jewellery, crockery, language*. These materials are drawn from the interiors of the space of ghosts that are found within this text. They are *my* materials, in that along the path of producing this work I was intent to understand how to care for the material excesses (waste/detritus) produced through writing, and to ask the questions of what materials I inherited? What materials are owed to me? And what materials I need to return? In following this path, the work moved towards considering how materials can be used today to gesture towards repair and restitution, and to think about how institutions, (spaces haunted by spectres) can be rethought

¹¹ Estenfanía Peñafiel Loaiza and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Can the Subaltern Speak?: Two Works Series Vol. 1*, 1st edition (London: Walther & Franz König, 2021).

¹² Judith Butler, *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly* (Harvard University Press, 2018).

¹³ Jacques Derrida, Peggy Kamuf, and Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, Routledge Classics, Repr (London: Routledge, 2011).

¹⁴ Sigmund Freud, *On Murder, Mourning and Melancholia*, UK ed. edition (Penguin, 2005).

¹⁵ Mark Fisher, *Ghosts of My Life: Writings on Depression, Hauntology and Lost Futures* (Winchester: Zero books, 2013), p. 92.

¹⁶ Julia Kristeva, *Black Sun: Depression and Melancholia*, European Perspectives (New York, NY: Columbia Univ. Press, 1989).

¹⁷ Derrida, Kamuf, and Derrida, p. 56.

and reconstituted. Building on the legacies of institutional critique found in art practices such as Laurie Parsons, Andrea Fraser and Eva Barto before turning to the law and ethics, and a regard for the visibility of the unseen. I have called the labour of this work *constitutional criticality*. In spending time with this labour throughout this research I found the questions of who has the right to steal? Who has the right to be social? And what does it mean when those who steal our possessions, also steal our sociality? Such questions allowed me to enter the work of *smuggling* and *fugitivity*, two premier notions for being centrifugal, articulated by Rogoff and Moten and Harney.^{19 20} In these pages these embodied criticalities are taken up as practices, whereby a process of theft becomes the articulation for a form of rescue as repair, and the migrancy found in diasporic history is set in motion through an awareness for work, words, intentions, and relationships to remain aware of their own transitoriness. As you work through this document, know that within lament the labour of this *constitutional criticality* is on-going and present, acting as one of the foundations that allows this work to unfold.

In working with these embodied materialities and criticalities a form was produced that resembles the slow drip of filter coffee, with the weight being towards the top end of the body, and as we flow through time, the text and work became more fragmented, unstable, light, and fluid. This form is indebted to the long-form prose poem where the musical and elegiac combine, in particular the works of Louis Zukofsky, Mahmoud Darwish, Edmond Jabès, Nathaniel Mackey and Anne Carson.^{21 22 23 24 25} This embodied materiality that moves from literature into the real and back again, constitutes a means of working that I call *slow time*, a term taken from funeral marches that has been adapted here to think about the durational and performative aspects of labouring with materials and languages of lament whilst embodying a refusal against individuality to speculate on how the present and the future can repair, reconstitute, and reveal the past and its losses.²⁶

As you work through this thesis, I ask that you remain, that you get *within*, and that you attend. These requests are urgent, as this text enfolds the work of the shiva (*the sitting*), the Jewish mourning ritual, in which we sit for seven days to grieve and lament our loss. Time here has been loosened from the constraints

¹⁹ Irit Rogoff, Irit, “Smuggling” - An Embodied Criticality’ <<http://eipcp.net/transversal/0806/rogoff1/en;>> [accessed 11 February 2021].

²⁰ Stefano Harney and Fred Moten, *The Undercommons : Fugitive Planning & Black Study* (Minor Compositions, 2013).

²¹ Louis Zukofsky, *A*, Rev. ed (New York: New Directions Pub, 2011).

²² Mahmoud Darwish, *Memory for Forgetfulness: August, Beirut, 1982*, First Edition, with a New Foreword by Sinan Antoon ed. edition (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2013).

²³ Edmond Jabès, *The book of questions* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1991).

²⁴ Nathaniel Mackey, *Double Trio*, Double Trio, 1 (New York, NY: New Directions Books, 2021).

²⁵ Anne Carson, *Glass, Irony, and God* (New York: New Directions Book, 1995).

²⁶ Zygmunt Bauman, *Liquid Modernity* (Cambridge, UK : Malden, MA: Polity Press ; Blackwell, 2000).

of the week, for there are losses from our past that continuously animate themselves as we work, labour, and live, that demand new timeframes of understanding. In this process research itself becomes the work of practice and the practice creates new archives. Archives that are ephemeral as much as they are concrete, and desire their maintenance be poetically addressed, whilst the losses found in existing archives be released through the work of lament. As such I have become a tremor in the archive that persists through living with those who cannot attend, and those who are unseen.²⁷

The body of terms that I have just laid out, will combine within this document to formulate a new methodology titled lamentology. This methodology is a practice, a means of approach, situated within lament and its echoes.

This research project began with Primo Levi's *If this is a Man*, a text about loss and survival, its ghost remains throughout, for this is a thesis littered with its own ghosts, those who can no longer speak, and their cinders, "what remains without remaining..."²⁸ ²⁹ This body of research practice, is situated in the *after*, of *If this is a Man*. It is a transparent box. As you enter it, I ask you to please remember, as much as I am present, I too am a ghost.

²⁷ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).

²⁸ Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man ; : And, The Truce* (Abacus, 1987).

²⁹ Jacques Derrida and Ned Lukacher, *Cinders*, *Posthumanities*, 28, First University of Minnesota Press edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014), p. 25.

The Lament is an Immaterial Thing

The lament is immaterial. It resists being fixed (in place). As such, when we work in or with lament, we work in the space of the ephemeral and relational. Within lament is a demand to revisit the ethics that condition a space, for the lament is a release. As we approach the lament, the lament reveals itself to us, in this, there is a mechanics of the labour of discovery, one that is related to site, its constituents and the entangled histories of these.³⁰ These concerns for immateriality manifest their way into things, in particular, through touch, scent, language and affect, yet there is always a resistance to the call to perform being concrete, therefore lament refuses being a form that cannot change.

Subtle World[s]

To produce methodologies within lament, is to produce adjacent to, what we might term, the unseen. And paying attention to where the unseen are is the first act of engaging with the work of lament. Yet the unseen is made of consistent withdrawals, refusals, subtleties, and codes. It is a world unto itself. One that, like a bandit, is embedded within, adjacent to, and apart from the current constitution of things. This world is the world of the peripheral, or what might also be known as the edges and the tremors of the archive [centre].³¹

The New Minor

What Deleuze and Guattari called minor literature in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, has found new forms of expression in the contemporary, as languages are now dispersive, existing in poetic articulations of exhibitions, performative protocols, or encased in stolen and reappropriated objects and materials. The unseen, the periphery, the *minor*, is a discourse where lament resides.³² As we settle down within this, lament appears as a remnant of the history of the moment from when “Kafka marks the impasse that bars access to writing for the Jews of Prague and turns their literature into something impossible – the impossibility of not writing, the impossibility of writing in German, the impossibility of writing otherwise”, acknowledging that this impossibility of the *not*, which is the moment of origin of *minor literature* is

³⁰ Byung-Chul Han, *The Disappearance of Rituals: A Topology of the Present* (Cambridge, UK ; Medford, MA: Polity Press, 2020).

³¹ Ann Laura Stoler, *Along the Archival Grain: Epistemic Anxieties and Colonial Common Sense* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2009).p. 19.

³² Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, *Theory and History of Literature*, v. 30 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986), p. 16.

consistently remaining and being renewed. Today it appears as a series of questions about the very spaces that we work, perform, and produce for and in.³³ This is not to say that the unseen wishes to remain unseen nor that the periphery wishes to only be peripheral. For there are forces that refuse the unseen being seen. And so, lament considers the unseen, asking if they wish to be seen, opening space for the periphery without demanding its visibility, through the work of care. It is the, *if they so wish*, at the end of the sentence that says, we aim to raise marginalised voices, it is the very thing that allows us to encounter these complex spaces. If they so wish.

We respect this space as an entity unto itself and do not attempt to make any claims upon it. Lament allows us to find the *within*, be *within*, and to get *within*. And so, lament is the acknowledgement of the right to remain un: unseen, unheard, underneath. As we approach this essential right, we unfold the right to question who our rights are for, who produced these rights, and where these rights might have been abused? Lament is the language of the displaced. A migrant form at work.

This rubric of the labour of discovery demands other, more intense labours, those of the labours of attendance and maintenance. The methodologies of lament are uncertain, for, as with any question that asks us to become *within*, and therefore not external, we traipse along path lines in the blind, finding our way through the liminal. Lament is a border that consistently makes demands dependent on contexts.³⁴ As such, in working in this space there is a call to remain diligent to the details of the minutiae and daily practices that allow us to be *within* these spaces. It is a rigorous undertaking. We must search inside ourselves. We must treat spaces and sites as though they were bodies. Caring for them, observing them, working through deep empathic strategies. Becoming constantly active. Consistently [re]asking ourselves how to produce, what it means to produce, who we are producing for, and seeking new means of working with the mechanics already in play. This means of working creates a continuum where a contingency of contexts are developed through our own personal migrancy. It is the act of "*becoming molecular*."³⁵ In that, precisely as Deleuze and Guattari said of Kafka, it is a fascination with smallness and imperceptibility, that expands into "a machine, or rather a *machinic assemblage*,

³³ "ibid" Deleuze and Guattari, p. 16.

³⁴ In her collected interviews, Andrea Fraser consistently speaks of institutional critique as a site-specific enquiry that develops out of context. What this entails is a constant questioning of the very institutions (sites) where she works and how these sites need to be addressed as complex, and potentially violent places, that have a built-in set of values, ethics, and hierarchies, many of which exclude certain types of people. By working through context, Fraser's work opens up the space in-between the seen (collections/exhibitions) and the unseen (labour/legislation/boards of governance) using a feminist lens to articulate arts potential to be critique and in particular one that makes demands on these sites and their contexts ability to change their codes. Andrea Fraser, *Andrea Fraser, Collected Interviews 1990–2018*, ed. by Rhea Anastas and Alejandro Cesarco (New York, NY: A.R.T. Press, 2019).

³⁵ "ibid" Deleuze and Guattari. p.37

the parts of which are independent of each other, but which functions nonetheless.”³⁶

³⁶ “ibid” Deleuze and Guattari. p.37

The Border. The Silence. The Song.

The border, the silence, the song. Laments encompass the oscillation between these forms. They appear in between spaces, they find their way into, and out of, as a liminal expressions of loss, grief, and pain arriving from an inner core.³⁷ I treat them as that what appears to me when nothing else can be said, sentences that form like apparitions, that must be written, existing in close proximity to nothingness, but with deep vitality, at the edge of meaning, intention, and the eradication of both these things. These poetic gestures are prepared in language, formed in writing but demand a voice, desiring existence as polyphonic expressions, which end in silent ears. These performative gestures stand in for the body and its absence. To produce lament, or to find a lament, is to wait for a form of pressure to reach its limit, and in that limit a hole, a gap, a border, is transformed into language, this language is lament. To produce lament, to treat it as a method, is to constantly be under this notion of pressure. The inexpressible, expressed. In thinking of how lament comes into being, we can begin to think about how we can use lament as method, and how this method might emerge in the present.

In his 1917-1918 essay '*On Lament and Lamentation*' the Jewish scholar Gershom Scholem wrote, "... lament is nothing other than a language on the border, language of the border itself."³⁸ When I hear the word border I think of the borders of nations. Which asks; are laments for or from those who have passed through borders? Are laments the sonic, material and linguistic howls for those who have lost their homes (at any point in history)? If so, then it would be logical to consider the work of lament to be a labour produced by the displaced, dispossessed and the othered, or more precisely a diasporic expression?

In this regard lament is a subjective expression. They speak from spaces of affect; grief, loss, shame, anger, fear, love. What a lament must do, is find a way to address its border as much as it is produced under one. What this means is to produce lament, one must encounter the conditions of positioning themselves in relation to whom they are speaking to, and to whom they are speaking for. This is not meant to be constricted by notions of identity, but before a lament can arrive, understanding one's identity helps in contemplating who these laments are for. For Scholem the lament was

³⁷ *Lament in Jewish Thought: Philosophical, Theological, and Literary Perspectives*, ed. by Ilit Ferber, Paula Schwebel, and Gershom Scholem, Perspectives on Jewish Texts and Contexts, volume 2 (Berlin ; Boston: De Gruyter Mouton, 2014), p. 354.

³⁸ Gershom Scholem, 'On Lament and Lamentation', in *Lament in Jewish Thought*, ed. by Ilit Ferber and Paula Schwebel, Philosophical, Theological, and Literary Perspectives, 1st edn (De Gruyter, 2014), pp. 313-20 <<https://www.jstor.org/stable/j.ctvbkjx96.22>> [accessed 13 February 2020].

entrenched in the Jewish corpus.³⁹ For me, the same could be said. One of the first written laments comes from the Torah, in the Book of Lamentations, hence its relation to the Jew, and their diasporic condition.⁴⁰ It is fixed in their history of movement throughout the world.

When I write I think about the condition under which, or from within which, I have my place in the world, I call into question the very nature of my being.⁴² This understanding offers me the position to address. I can address those who are no longer here and the places (homes) they lost. I can also address those who have a complicity in the events that produced this loss and their absence. This lamentation can transform grief into an act of resistance, developing questions addressed towards historic and ongoing systems of violence, oppression, and othering.

Few works embody the complexities of lament and the Jewish corpus as well as the work of Paul Celan. Celan's work, written in German, which was not his first language, managed to find a means to speak after the horror of Auschwitz, where Celan's mother was one of the murdered. Years later he committed suicide, such was his grief. His work addressed the great loss of the concentration camps. Celan's work takes a specific tone and rhythm that leaves space for the inexpressible to exist, allowing it to live in the silences and the symbols of the poems.

“Speak, you also
speak as the last
have your say

Speak –
But keep yes and no unsplit
And give your say this meaning
give it the shade

Give it shade enough,
give it as much
as you know has been dealt out between
midnight and midday and midnight^{39,43}

³⁹“teaching and lament were intertwined such that it could come to pass that the teaching lamented and lament taught, without causing the orders to collapse, as endangered as they [the Jewish people] were. For the great misfortune that was their destiny gave rise again and again to mourning, and the mourning revolutionized itself in lament, ...” Scholem.

⁴⁰ ‘Lamentations’, *Sefaria.Org*, 2019 <<https://www.sefaria.org/Lamentations.1?lang=en>> [accessed 1 January 2019].

⁴² “To grieve, and to make grief itself into a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction, but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself. The disorientation of grief – “Who have I become?” or indeed “What is left of me?” “What is it in the Other that I have lost?” – posits the “I” in the mode of unknowingness.” Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (Verso, 2006), p. 30.

⁴³ Paul Celan and Michael Hamburger, *Selected Poems* (Penguin Books, 1996), p. 101.

But who does Celan write to, and who did he write for? In this poem, *Speak you also*, Celan asks someone to speak back to him, calling out into the void. He calls up the dead, taking their silence and placing them on a stand, giving them voice. This relates directly back to the notion of Scholem's border, the space between speech and silence. How can the dead speak? Our assumption is that they cannot, so we speak on behalf of them, and in doing so we speak to them. Their silence creates our voice. This might be considered a kind of weeping, and this kind of weeping produces the song (poem).

Celan writes out of his loss, he writes because the loss is too much to manage, and this expression appears to him and then to us in poetic form. I feel Celan speaks directly to me. I feel his words are addressed to all the children of Jews who contemplate the Holocaust, and consider it part of their make-up, but I also feel he is addressing post war Europeans, many of whom endured the war. His work exacts Scholem's consideration of the poetic force of lament, of its ability to teach, of its ability to speak to and for the grief of others, and to embody affect.⁴⁴

Who is being addressed and the one who is making the address are central elements in Celan's work. When I say that Celan's poems place silent voices on the stand what I am implying is that the poems should be read as the testimony of a witness, they remain a form of subjective evidence. Celan struggles and collides with language, he cannot say what happened, so he finds a way to code these events, using symbols to encase his mourning.

In his essay on Celan, *Sovereignities in Question*, Jacques Derrida asks us to think about who is the witness to these poems? And, who witnesses the witness?⁴⁵ These two questions set Derrida on a path into the work of Celan, unpicking the secrets encased. Derrida states they "accumulate their potential deep in the crypt of the poem".⁴⁶ This notion of the secret which carries force and energy, for which Derrida employs the Hebrew word *shibboleth*, is where Celan leaves his testimonies. What transpires from Derrida's reading of Celan is the necessity for engaging with history, and how language contains histories. Celan takes symbols, dates, and words, rooted deep in Jewish history, and re-introduces them within his own context, within his own time, this becomes the password to understanding who Celan is, who he is writing for, what he has witnessed, and how the Jewish story, is a story of consistent historical

⁴⁴ Scholem.

⁴⁵ Jacques Derrida, Thomas Dutoit, and Outi Pasanen, *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan* (Fordham University Press, 2005)

⁴⁶ Ibid. Derrida, Dutoit, and Outi Pasanen, p. 90.

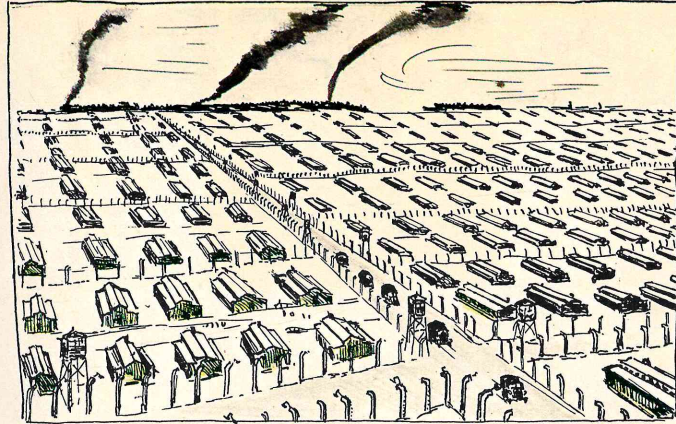
trauma.⁴⁷ Celan calls upon his presence to stand in for the absent. He is both the witness and asking us to witness him.

This notion of witnessing the absent can be developed in many ways. In the drawings of Auschwitz that Alfred Kantor made after his survival from the camp we experience a more didactic but equally haunting mode of witnessing.⁴⁸ In this case drawing is used as a method for witnessing, but it too stands in for the absent, and simultaneously expresses the exacting impossibility and barbaric nature of being the witness to genocide. These forms of witnessing, poetic in every sense, are what Adorno meant when he said “To write poetry after Auschwitz is barbaric. And this corrodes even the knowledge of why it has become impossible to write poetry today.”⁴⁹ This often-misinterpreted quote does not mean we must stop writing poetry, but that to write poetry after the Holocaust is to write poetry in relation to it, to contemplate how the impossible became possible, how to directly address the loss is inexpressible, and to accept that there is no way to escape the violence of this moment in history.

⁴⁷ Ibid. Derrida, Dutoit, and Outi Pasanen, p. 63.

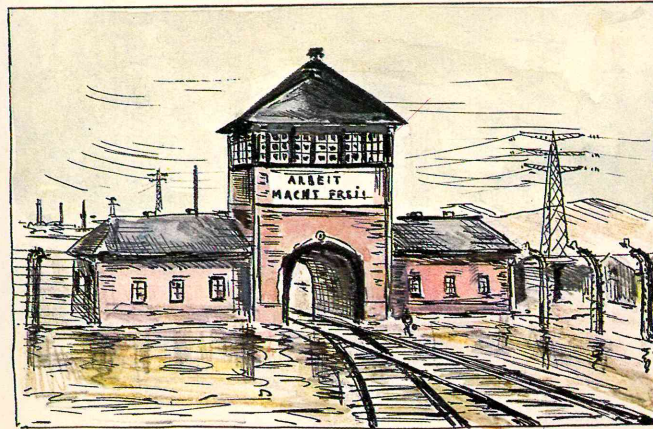
⁴⁸ Alfred Kantor, *The Book of Alfred Kantor: An Artist's Journal of the Holocaust* (London: Piatkus Books, 1987).

⁴⁹ Theodor W. ; Weber Shierry Adorno, *Prisms Cultural Criticism And Society Spengler, Huxley, Kafka, Proust, Schoenberg, Jazz, Etc.*, First Edition (Neville Spearman, 1967).



Camp Birkenau Entire view (20 square miles)

SMOKE OF CREMATORIES, BURNING PRISONERS
AT THE RATE OF 20,000 A DAY* IN REAR
* IN JUNE 1944



Birkenau Main entrance
(AUSCHWITZ II)

(fig.1. Alfred Kantor, *An Artist's Journal of the Holocaust*, 1987)

Derrida saying the *shibboleth* is entrenched in the crypt of the poem incites the corporeality and death of Adorno's barbarism, introducing a wound that is encased in the poetics of witnessing. This wound, trapped in the secret of the poem, is "what opens, what does not heal, the hiatus, is indeed the mouth that speaks there where it is wounded".⁵⁰ Celan's poems speak on behalf of his wound and the wound of the other. This sense of the open mouth that reveals a wound returns us back to lament, as the border language, for lament and the wound are identical in that even as we attempt to close them through interpretation, or as Derrida would say "suture" it back together, it still speaks, it finds a way to remain open.⁵¹

⁵⁰ Ibid. Derrida, Dutoit, and Outi Pasanen, p. 166.

⁵¹ Ibid. Derrida, Dutoit, and Outi Pasanen, p. 167.

We could then say Edvard Munch's *The Scream, 1893* captures a figure in lament.⁵² The open mouth that is silent in the painting is the wound, and 'the silence' of this face its secret. The same can be said for Hamlet's soliloquy, or Samuel Beckett's *Not I*, where, in both, the figure is left tormented by an unanswerable question.⁵³ ⁵⁴ This haunted scream is also trapped in the drawing *Screaming Woman, 1981* by Maria Lassnig, where a woman is held blind by two hands, her mouth open with anguish.⁵⁵ What is interesting in regard to all these examples is how quickly the wound, the open mouth, the howling voice, also becomes a symbol for an unresolved psychological traumatising. This feels the same for Celan's poems, and for that matter the work of poet Nelly Sachs:

"In one moment a star closes its eye
 The toad loses its moonstone
 You in your bed give your breath to night
 O map of the universe
 Your signs show the veins of strangeness
 Out of our minds

Disinherited we weep for dust -"⁵⁶

What Sachs offers us in this untitled poem from her collection *Glowing Enigmas* is a vision into the rage and melancholia of lament, her anguish remains as an unresolved trauma.

Witnessing these different expressions allows us to explore the variation of tones that can be developed when producing our own lament. Celan and Sachs actively take on the tone of eulogy, employing technologies of the self, in this case poetic memoir. Their poems read with a ferocity but also with sorrow. Somehow their rage, their disbelief for the horror that produced their condition (Sachs fled Nazi Germany in 1940) manifests a tone that is timely and dark to the point of which it can feel and read as though one were listening to an echo in a dark, empty, vacuous space. Whilst compared to the monologue in Beckett's *Not I*, performed in the void (a darkened room) which attempts to fill the space with language, pushing sense to its limit as the psychosis of the narrator finds themselves approaching collapse, there is a

⁵² Edvard Munch, *The Scream*, 1893.

⁵³ William Shakespeare, *Hamlet: The Oxford Shakespeare*, ed. by G. R. Hibbard, Reissue edition (Oxford England; New York: OUP Oxford, 2008).

⁵⁴ Samuel Beckett, *Not I/Foolfalls/Rockaby* (London: Royal Court Theatre and Mighty Mouth, 2004).

⁵⁵ 'Maria Lassnig Dialogues', *The Albertina Museum Vienna* <<https://www.albertina.at/en/exhibitions/maria-lassnig-dialogues/>> [accessed 17 October 2022].

⁵⁶ Nelly Sachs and Michael Hamburger, *Glowing Enigmas*, The Living Library, First edition (Portland, Oregon: Tavern Books, 2013), p. 32.

clear desire for emptiness in the poetry of Celan and Sachs, they withhold their tongues.

Tone, delivery, and touch, play a key role for underpinning the markers of laments. In many ways the tone of a work is what allows us to feel that there is pain, grief and loss attached. Tone is a means for accessing the affect in the work. If we think through how tone is delivered, we consider something that lives outside a work. Its absences. Absence is a central gesture for lament. Scholem writes about 'the silence', and absence could be considered as the physical embodiment of silence.⁵⁷ When we look at Sachs's poem above, we encounter the gap between the central stanza and the single last line. This gap is 'the silence'. It is the space where nothingness exists, Sachs makes us wait for the force of the lament to exact its language. In looking at these silences, we begin to develop a sense that something or someone is missing, and that subject's being can only appear as a ghost in the space of the missing. These are haunted poems.

What becomes apparent is, that this space, this empty body, is working to interrupt the voice. In interrupting the voice, a wound is produced, and this wound is the very space where loss exists. 'The silence' of the poem is the performance of absence, and the performance of this absence is what allows the language of lament to reveal itself.

I think we should consider such an absence, as a means for inversion, negation, and failure in our ability for interpretation. By inversion what I mean to suggest is that 'the silence' as a poetical gesture and method, is the space where meaning can be interrupted and muddled. In messy-ing meaning, new spaces and positions open within the work. This process returns us back to the wound from which lament comes. In his analyses of Celan, Werner Hamacher states "the law of inversion – the greater the distance, the nearer the figure..."⁵⁸ Taken in this sense 'the silence' is the space for radical proximity. We get closer to the meaning in 'the silence', we also therefore get closer to that which is or those who are, absent.⁵⁹ What happens in 'the silence' is that the singular, personal wound, is annihilated, and becomes a communal wound. Or as Celan writes, "Where it never was, it will always remain. / We never were, so we remain with it".⁶⁰ The reason for this is that by offering space for silence we are presented with the option to be addressed once more, we take on agency within the work, and this agency enables us to become part of the lament. It is a process of identification, but also a limitation placed

⁵⁷ Ibid. Scholem.

⁵⁸ Werner Hamacher, *Premises: Essays on Philosophy and Literature from Kant to Celan*, Meridian, Crossing Aesthetics (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1999), p. 346.

⁵⁹ Inge-Birgitte siegumfeldt, 'difficult bond: Derrida and Jewishness', *the Jewish quarterly review*, 103.3 (2013), 385-400 (p. 395).

⁶⁰ Hamacher, p. 346.

upon our ability to read or understand. It enacts itself as a refusal against understanding.

Derrida considers this process of refusal as a duty to the other. In his interview with Evelyne Grossman "*The Truth that Wounds*" he says "...the duty of the reader-interpreter is to write while letting the other speak, or so as to let the other speak."⁶¹ Derrida believed that in trying to understand a work we must countersign or write our own interpretation that attempts to keep the wound open, and so we take on the duty of letting the work speak. What he means by this "speaking", is that for a work to have its own voice, and work on us, we must allow it to work upon us not at us. To do this, we must find a way to get inside the poem (lament) placing ourselves so deep within it that we are incapable of producing an interpretation that would close the wound as this would mean closing our own wounds and therefore our feelings. This process of understanding relies on 'the silence', as this is the very space where we can begin to inhabit the work, to feel embodied, and to relate to the other.

I want to turn at this point to Primo Levi's work, *If this is a Man*, as his memoir of Auschwitz offers up another possible means by which we can access lament, one that is based in historical trauma as testimony.⁶²

I spoke before of Celan's poems as those of the witness, and Levi enacts this reality in far more explicit terms. He transforms the experience of Auschwitz into a historical document, one that not only serves as record of the atrocities that took place there, but also as a stand in for a corpus of absent/lost people. The reason this form, the historical memoir, functions as lament, is that it attempts to give voice for those who were killed. It speaks on behalf of the lost. One of the questions that Levi makes us consider is, what is grievable life? And how do we use historical memoir to remember and maintain a responsibility to 'the other', in particular to 'the other' within. Levi uses the document to show us a method for protecting 'the other' from being dehumanised, and potentially annihilated, again.⁶³

Testimony and memoir are different means by which the language of lament can appear, take for example the method of address found in the Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish's prose poem *Memory for Forgetfulness*.⁶⁴ Written almost twenty years after the 1982 Israeli invasion of Lebanon, Darwish's elegiac prose

⁶¹ Ibid. Derrida, Dutoit, and Outi Pasanen, p. 166.

⁶² Primo Levi, *If This Is a Man: And, The Truce* (Abacus, 1987).

⁶³ Jacques Derrida, 'Abraham, the Other', in *Judeities: Questions for Jacques Derrida*, ed. by Bettina Bergo, Joseph Cohen, and Raphael Zagury-Orly, trans. by Michael B. Smith (New York: Fordham University Press, 2007), p. 4.

⁶⁴ Darwish, Mahmoud, *Memory for Forgetfulness: August, Beirut, 1982*, First Edition, with a New Foreword by Sinan Antoon ed. edition (Berkeley, Calif.: University of California Press, 2013)

poem reflects on the social and intimate experiences of war and politics. Darwish sets in a motion an essential text, attempting to remember that which he wishes to forget but cannot. Such an action, the decision to face grief, loss and violence through words, and memory, calls back to the duty Derrida considers the responsibility of lament. Darwish's lyricism exemplifies the speech of the other, and of addressing the other, articulating that in memory is where we can exist side by side with the lost. It is a universal voice that speaks through his Palestinian specificity to open the door to further diasporic feelings of lament.

Lament is a poetic medium; it searches for song. It works by navigating 'the silence' that exists in the space of mourning, grief, and loss. Most of all, lament is the work of the displaced, it is forced out in resistance to authority and suppression, this is why it is always an address, why it always maintains secret, and this is what the border represents and means, it is a liminal expression of an inherited relation to histories.

[3:54 pm, 13/06/2019] Socialising [1]

[meal no.1 Chicken Soup]

[Chicken carcass

Onions

Garlic

Carrots

Celery

Parsley

Salt

Pepper

Olive oil

Water]

II.

How can we bring lament into contemporary art and writing practices and find new formulations for what lament can offer as a methodological approach within these fields?

To answer this, I want to think about how Scholem's proposition, that the lament is a language of the border, can provide a means to find a conceptual model that allows us to exist and be *within*. Reframing this term, *the border*, and moving into the space of the periphery, and therefore thinking about how this work can allow itself to be occupied by a corpus of the *minor*. What begins to develop and be understood as we pursue the work of lament is that its expression today is found as a language of the dis- and misplaced.

Within the contemporary there are several key theorists and writers who are articulating an awareness of this language and formulating methods for working with this language of grief that can help us. My proposition is to use these theorists to build a new methodology, called lamentology, that combines the past and the present and begins to make this work function in the field of art and writing now.

Before we enter these contemporary theoretical works it is important to note a contemporary of Scholem who lays the ground for these theorists. That of Walter Benjamin, and in particular his *Arcade's Project* and *Theses on the Philosophy of History*.^{65 66} Although not specifically laments, these texts are grounded by Benjamin's clear understanding of the oncoming slaughter of Jewish bodies, of the death that haunted the 1920s and 1930s from World War I, and the economic failures within those times, as well as the rise of national socialism and technological warfare. Benjamin's writing possesses a melancholic message that captures a mood for his present socio-political moment. What's more, the means of his own life and death make it impossible to read Benjamin without his autobiographical context, and without understanding that he too was a Jewish man, living in continental Europe over a period where being a Jew began to be a [re]contested issue and eventually led to them being less than human again, which quite literally meant being a body in and of a border. Benjamin lived his final days smuggling his body across borders, writing in the face of fascism, writing out of necessity but also writing as lament.

⁶⁵ Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002).

⁶⁶ Walter Benjamin and others, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, 1. Schocken paperback ed., [Nachdr.] (New York: Schocken Books, 2012).

The lament can also be seen in this manner. As an act or gesture that resists any force that determines to assign a human less than human. It is hard to concretise this resistance, but the proposal towards becomes a valid tool. This motion toward resistance refuses those who say any family does not deserve the right to grieve its loss, or that any corpus does not deserve to express their grief. It also suggests that loss is a historical pulse, one that arises through the labour of understanding one's subject position and social conditioning. Benjamin's writing teaches us to think through our bodies, and to consider our relation to the spaces we pass through. We could call this an embodied language, a language of understanding that is felt not only thought. And herein lies the lament of his work. In his text *Unpacking my Library* Benjamin posits that the body is a thinking machine, that its emotions allow us to see and understand the very essence and passions of the collector, and that no collection, and therefore no work, is authored without traces of these autobiographic data.^{68 69} Such a sentiment is shared by Julietta Singh in her elegiac memoir on archives *No Archive will Restore You* as she writes "Every object is a narrative that is already embedded in me, and how the object came to be mine is an embodied history."⁷⁰ Both are working through embodied criticalities which are the underscore of lamentology.

Maggie Nelson's *The Argonauts* takes this embodiment and pushes it to its fullest potential, dragging the hidden traces of the author's biography out of the shadows and making it the energetic pulse of their work.⁷¹ This expands the potential of Benjamin's concept and speaks also of the progress in human rights movements that have allowed historically minor positions to feel they have the authorial freedom to speak from their position and own their space. Nelson moves between poetry, theory, and autobiography to give an in-depth study of identity, gender performativity and childbirth, embodying Lauren Berlant's notion of the *auto-poetic* by treating daily thought and exposure as political social tool.⁷² What Nelson manages to achieve is a method of writing that speaks in a manner of address that entangles grief, loss, sorrow, and joy, but also, offers a poignant reminder that a person's struggle is a result of interactions with complex and violent systems. They inherit their *auto-poetic* style from Benjamin, using a form that is at once essayistic and personal, and which situates itself in challenging dominant narratives concerning bodies and their rights in the contemporary.

⁶⁸ Walter Benjamin and others, *Illuminations: Essays and Reflections*, 1. Schocken paperback ed., [Nachdr.] (New York: Schocken Books, 2012).

⁶⁹ 'Walter Benjamin Unpacking My Library | PDF', *Scribd* <<https://www.scribd.com/doc/209391467/Walter-Benjamin-Unpacking-My-Library>> [accessed 30 August 2021].

⁷⁰ Julietta Singh, *No Archive Will Restore You*, 1st edition (Santa Barbara, CA: Punctum Books, 2018), p. 40.

⁷¹ Maggie Nelson, *The Argonauts*, UK ed. edition (Melville House UK, 2016).

⁷² Berlant.

Benjamin's final days smuggling his body out of France, being fugitive, and his writing in the face of fascism are also the groundwork for two contemporary forces and methods that contain lament that we can now employ; the theory of smuggling as proposed by Irit Rogoff, and fugitivity from Fred Moten and Stefano Harney.^{73 74} These theorists are concerned with methods for formulating a community of bodies that exist in periphery of the centre.

For Rogoff the centre is a space we have exhausted, that we can do "without" as it refuses to accept the displacement of the migrant and its descendants. She writes:

““Without” is an interesting formulation because it isn't turning your back on, or denying, what you had at your disposal previously. It assumes that you had a model, to begin with. You lived it out, so you got as much out of it as may have been interesting at that point. And you've now found yourself in a position where you're actively doing without the certitudes you have had without as yet having produced a hard-and-fast subject or methodology to replace them.”⁷⁵

Within this research I do not associate lament with this term 'without', but more with the concern of the "within", for I feel that the centre that Rogoff says we have exhausted in fact contains and resists releasing the objects, vessels and legal structures that can allow our grief and our bodies to move freely. However, I do agree that there is no new "hard and fast methodology" of the centre and that instead, we work towards new, experimental methodologies that seek to situate themselves in a layered relation to time, one that is unfolding right now, one that is working its way back into history and one that is preparing ideas from this for the near future.

Rogoff takes this into the space of smuggling, which develops a methodology for a world operating outside of the lines of regular economics. She offers an economics of exchange and trust, an economics of the migrant and a means of criticality that does not come from within a known epistemological position, but questions the history of epistemology, and asks what a smuggler would know, and therefore a migrant, or someone who is not from "the centre". Of course, the practical and real concerns of smuggling mean that this theory's potential as a new model is also haunted by the dangers that co-exist with smuggling in our socio-political world. As Mathieu

⁷³ Ibid. Rogoff, Irit.

⁷⁴ Ibid. Stefano Harney and Moten.

⁷⁵ Peggy Phelan and Irit Rogoff, "Without": A Conversation', *Art Journal*, 60.3 (2001), 34-41.

Aikin's detailed account of the refugee crisis *The Naked Don't Fear the Water* details, whilst "There's always a smuggler's road" this road is always treacherous and before we submit to taking it, we must prepare ourselves for its perils."⁷⁶ What then is the language of the border for the smuggler? Rogoff explains

"Smuggling operates as a principle of movement, of fluidity and of dissemination that disregards boundaries. Within this movement the identity of the objects [and subjects] themselves are obscured; they are not visible, identifiable. They function very much like concepts and ideas that inhabit space in a quasi-legitimate way. Ideas that are not really at home within a given structure of knowledge and thrive in the movement between things and do not settle into a legitimating frame or environment."⁷⁷

Meanwhile in Fred Moten and Stefano Harney's now seminal text *The Undercommons: Fugitive Planning and Black Study*, the relationship to "the centre" is considered in terms of the sovereign individual's relationship to the institution and their ability to use fugitive methods to produce an 'Undercommons'.⁷⁸ This concept, which functions in a holistic manner, sees all players in the system as interconnected, and is a poignant way of understanding how to first position oneself in relation to institutional power, and then to ask oneself how to use one's own position to choose whether they are complicit in supporting this power or uprooting it, or perhaps both, be that in covert or loud ways. As they define it:

"Fugitivity is not only escape, "exit" as Paolo Virno might put it, or "exodus" in the terms offered by Hardt and Negri, fugitivity is being separate from settling. It is a being in motion that has learned that "organizations are obstacles to organising ourselves."⁷⁹

This process of 'organising ourselves' provide the foundations for building the 'Undercommons'. 'The Undercommons' functions as a kind of sub-club that works not outside of the institution but from within it. It asks players who are in relation to institutions to ask themselves what their position is and to work from within to enact acts of fugitivity. It is work born out of Black Radical

⁷⁶ Matthieu Aikins, *The Naked Don't Fear the Water: A Journey Through the Refugee Underground*, 1st edition (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2022).

⁷⁷ Ibid. Rogoff, Irit.

⁷⁸ Ibid. Stefano Harney and Moten.

⁷⁹ Ibid. Stefano Harney and Moten, p. 10.

study. In this work, the act of theft, in particular of stealing knowledge, is seen as a necessary act, in that many historic materials and knowledge bases have been stolen from diasporic peoples, and that to re-engage with the truth of these histories one must liberate them from their containment, which are withheld in institutions and archives, gifting them back to the communities from which they came.

This study also suggests that ‘The Undercommons’ should occupy spaces within institutions that remain empty. For example, within universities many study rooms are left unused for many hours of the days. Moten and Harney suggest students become residents of these rooms, producing study groups, reading texts, and making work. This is Moten and Harney’s fugitivity in action. What this offers up is the notion that knowledge contained within the institution needs to be released, and we, the players, must make it tremor and appear. Moten and Harney’s argument is concerned specifically with realising that the law has already created obstacles for allowing many bodies from obtaining and accessing knowledge, and so to gain knowledge, fugitive actions are not a last resort, but a right.

What both smuggling and fugitivity begin to offer is a question that can also be found in the legacies of institutional critique. They ask if we have completed this work and if we are now in search of a new mode, one that has yet to be defined, one that concerns repair, restitution, grief, and lament all in movement. These theories propose a new kind of institutional criticality based in feeling and subjectivity, whereby the work becomes “critique in action, critique as process, critique as verb” as Olivia Aherne writes in her review of Andrea Fraser’s exhibition *This meeting in being Recorded, 2021* at Kunstlerhaus Stuttgart, in which Fraser embodied multiple voices to articulate the culture of whiteness, treating it as an institution, to reveal the inherent violence involved in its inability to understand racism without inviting those who are harmed by it to explain it.^{80 81}

Within both the models of smuggling and fugitivity there is a clear positioning of theories written from displaced and othered perspectives, and this is key to lament and to what I am proposing to achieve with lamentology.

lamentology is a methodology of displaced/dispossessed/diasporic voices: this is who it addresses. When I say that these theories are concerned with formulating communities outside the centre this is not totally true. These communities already exist, but what is perhaps being grappled with is how to

⁸⁰ Olivia Aherne, ‘Andrea Fraser, This meeting is being recorded’ *Art Monthly: Magazine: Issue: 454 March 2022*, pp. 33-34 <<https://www.artmonthly.co.uk/magazine/site/issue/march-2022>> [accessed 5 May 2022].

⁸¹ ‘Künstlerhaus Stuttgart | This Meeting Is Being Recorded’ <<https://kuenstlerhaus.de/en/inhalt/this-meeting-is-being-recorded/>> [accessed 17 October 2022].

bring some of the practical models that exist in these worlds into the spaces of art and writing practices. How do we take our personal practices of grief, for me, the shiva, practices that centre within the family and expand this notion of the family, employing fugitive and smuggler relationality? This is the experiment lament allows us to pursue. What this also relies upon is the work that always exists within the family, and especially in the migrant family, and that is the work of hospitality.

This notion of hospitality brings us back to Derrida who writes:

“Let us say yes to who or what turns up, before any determination, before any anticipation, before any identification, whether or not it has to do with a foreigner, an immigrant, an invited guest, or an unexpected visitor, whether or not the new arrival is the citizen of another country, a human, animal, or divine creature, a living or dead thing, male or female.”⁸³

Hospitality is a fundamental code for smuggling and fugitive ontologies. We are bound by a project that opens doors, that creates access, that says we are all hosts, guests, and strangers at once. In doing this we carry our luggage from place to place, but we also carry and care for one another’s luggage, and within this luggage, is debt, friendship, alliance, gifts, invitations, grief, and our lament. As such the containment that Moten and Harney want us to deconstruct from *within* and the embodied criticality that Rogoff sees within the smuggler’s state of mind, are lament, it is a form of our expression.

⁸³ Jacques Derrida and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2000), p. 77.

In the Continuum

Working within lament demands working in a continuous sequence of events and adjacent elements which develop out of each other. This produces a sequential crypto unfolding that happens over time. This *in-continuum* frames the work of lament as a contingent research and discourse. Here the necessity becomes to tend to the excesses, slippages and detritus of forms and materials as they appear, treating them as constituent elements to our future.

To work in *in-continuum* means to work in the blur.⁸⁴ The blur being the space between that which is supposedly static (history) and that which is fluid (affect/subjectivity).⁸⁵ As such things produced *in-continuum* are being made in real time and are reflective and immersed in the processes of living and living with loss as well as the all but hidden. This labour allows us to invite ritual and repetitive gestures to take place and be considered part of the making of work.⁸⁷

When working in this manner our conception of the “*archive*” is radically reconsidered as something ongoing and gestural, which develops its own logic by way of the emerging networks between objects, words, actions, and conversations that are being produced *within*. Our work is to situate the ‘*minor*’ in the archive by uncovering their stories in the underground and backstage.⁸⁸

The lament’s relational potential is released within the work of *in-continuum*, as we flow through these disseminations, collecting, and amassing these material excesses, we become aware of our own futility and as such incompleteness.⁸⁹

Lament is an unfolding and incomplete production, this is why it is made *in-continuum*. It is the act of a dog chasing its own tail, or an ornithologist chasing butterflies.

⁸⁴ “The “structure of feeling” is a residue of common historical experience sensed but not spoken in a social formation, except as the heterogenous but common practices of a historical moment emanate them...” In her work *Cruel Optimism*, Lauren Berlant delves into the ways in which writers and artists make intimate publics through combining affect with historical events occurring in their time. This binding of feeling with politics produces the very blurring being described here, where a body comes into relation both with the historical and cultural impulses that reside within it and the events that are impacting that body now, in the present. The blur is this haze that prevents any individual from separating themselves from the social, and yet allows them to remain sovereign in thought, therefore when we say, we work in the blur, we say we work in between feeling as ours and feeling as a residue of society’s culture or traces inherited from history, and that this awareness is what allows us to produce ideas, thoughts and expressions. Berlant. p.65

⁸⁵ “...if we want to say that being actually moves, then such movement cannot emerge from ontological discontinuity but must emerge from the twin conditions of continuity [solida] and motion [flux].” Thomas Nail, *Lucretius I: An Ontology of Motion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2018), p. 121.

⁸⁷ Han.

⁸⁸ *Archive Stories: Facts, Fictions, And The Writing Of History*, ed. by Burton, Illustrated edition (Durham, N.C: Duke University Press, 2006).

⁸⁹ Maria Stepanova and Sasha Dugdale, *In Memory of Memory* (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2021), p. 22.

*The following chapter *An Unfinished History of Glass* is written in a very particular style. When I originally wrote this text, I was consumed by the desire to encrypt myself and my personal relationships into poetic form, and to then develop that form as a means for performing. Having spent years performing texts it soon became apparent that this text was the first instance where I no longer wanted to be seen as 'the performer', nor did I want to write only for the audience in the room. So, I began to write to ghosts, some of my own, some that I felt I could relate to in the distance. Somehow even the living were beyond reach. I began to develop a plan for how this performance would occur. As you read this section, I implore you to read it aloud as though you were reading someone a book at night, except that I ask that you also consider the room you are reading in as an audience member.*

This coming poetic series of texts also contains memories of my romantic relationship, and as I look back on it, I think of how my desire to encode my life, is also situated in a desire to care for the love that was present in this time. It is on the border of opacity. It had to be. For I wanted to protect the very thing I loved. The people who were part of my life.⁹¹

*You will also note that from this point forward dates appear. These dates, as I remarked in *What's in the Box*, are about marking time, but they are also my method for holding on to time with those I care for and for remarking on my own continuity. This insistence on marking dates also forced me to write even when I found writing hard. I had initially convinced myself that diaristic writing was somehow less valid, but today I feel that had it not been for the date the pulse of this research project would have felt like a series of strange jumps instead of a continuous flow, and that the diary as a form of address is one of the most intimate and historically relevant there is.*

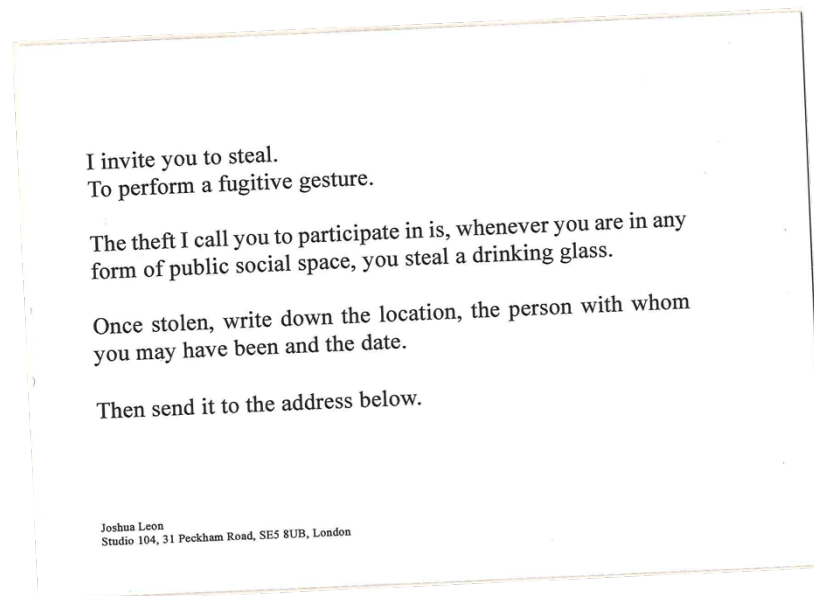
⁹¹ "I discovered I could only write in opaque poetic fragments. Pain seemed to belong more to poetry than to narrative prose. But even poetry, for all its subtle rendering, fails to capture the pain of pain, its illegible core." Julietta Singh captures here precisely the sentiment of what I too felt at the time of writing, that in the act of trying to express the inexpressible there is only opaque poetic fragments as a form, but even this form is only a proximity to the actual information that wishes to express itself. Singh, p. 61.

This work, of remarking on the date, and the time at which writing occurred was inspired by On Kawara.⁹² For so long I wished to hide this reference, I felt it was too obvious a choice. But as I continued to read more about his work, life and methods, it became clear that through painting the date every day and sending correspondences, in which he stated that “I am still alive”, he also produced one of the great comments on time’s passing as being deeply rooted in human experience and our minor roles in history.⁹³ And so, if my dates could exemplify my own act of reminding myself, “I too am still alive”, I think this is a remarkable claim within lament, for it too suggests that grief is an act of staying alive, of living, of being, and remaining with the lost.

⁹² Angela Choon, *On Kawara: 1966*, ed. by Tommy Simoons, 1st edition (Antwerpen: Ludion, 2017).

⁹³ ‘On Kawara: I Am Still Alive Suicide Telegrams’, *The Guggenheim Museums and Foundation* <<https://www.guggenheim.org/audio/track/on-kawara-i-am-still-alive-suicide-telegrams>> [accessed 17 October 2022].

Protocol [1] (The Invitation)



(fig.2. Joshua Leon, Invitation to Steal, 2019)

An Unfinished History of Glass

Kristallnacht, 1938.⁹⁴

nights spent stealing glass.⁹⁶

[12:54 pm, 05/12/2019]

When i began this gesture of using the drinking glass as a symbol for moments spent with others, i had the simple intention of making an inventory of my social life. i was, or had been, thinking about the reclaiming of social space as a kind, intimate, political gesture, a movement towards the dispossessed. But it turns out that this intention might have dispersed as my “collecting” began to feel akin to kleptomania. i cannot stop, for i am entrapped in an impossibility of rescue. i wanted the glass to say i am still here. i am here for those that are not here. That no longer hear. i wanted the glass to hold the milk, that i would dye black, which was a mere stand in for the impossibility of black milk. i wanted the glass to stand for me in space. But i am not in space, not like that. What happens when objects perform absence? How do objects perform? How does absence perform? What is the performativity of absence?

[4:19pm, 04/01/2020]

i do not wish to see you yet/ i am not alone here/ in the silence/ in this space/ of what you would call the floor/ but i would call it the unhome/ the un/ of a home/ that is not made./ You were brought/ from SP./ an evening/ where we met/ again/ after one year/ after seven years/after seventy two years/ still/ with a whiteness that borders to black/ “we drink you at night/ we drink you at sundown.”⁹⁸/ held in the recycled glass/ where were we?⁹⁹/ not on your continent/ not in your house/ in the stillness of your body/ the softness of your voice/ in the darkness of your stare/ the love of us/ us/ and you/ and we/ and again we meet/ unbroken/ possessed/ spoken to/ if only to inhabit the spaces at the edge/ the unsaid/ the left/ unsaid/ the vessels of your tongue/ reconstituted as stolen glass/ am i a thief?/ Would you call me your fugitive?/ if i swear to steal them for you/ if i promise i am only claiming back us/ if we can be claimed./ Quiet/ let you speak/ if you can/ if you must/ if you/ and to speak/ in this tongue/ not your home/ not your mother/ gone/ your mother gone/ our mothers’ gone/ our bonds/ unsilent./ We refuse to stop talking/ we resist being silent now/ even silence is loud/ this silence/ of the stillness of your look/ down/ and away/ not at/ we drink/ and we drink/ and we drink/ you remain full/ in full/ your stare in me/ i stare/ at this

⁹⁴ Wolf Gruner, “The Forgotten Mass Destruction of Jewish Homes during “Kristallnacht””, *The Conversation* <<http://theconversation.com/the-forgotten-mass-destruction-of-jewish-homes-during-kristallnacht-123301>> [accessed 8 August 2021].

⁹⁶ On February 12th, 2019, I stole the first drinking glasses. I used them for a work in an exhibition title *The Same Tendency* at Summer Hall Place, Edinburgh. It was at this moment something was triggered inside me regarding the glass as a haunted material. In the exhibition the glass were upside down with liquid trapped inside, an exercise in understanding the material potential of poetic inversion.

⁹⁸ Celan and Hamburger.

⁹⁹ This fragment was written on Holocaust Memorial Day 2020 (January 27). Paul Celan’s *todesfuge (death fugue)* was first published in 1948. *Celan, Paul, and Michael Hamburger. 1996. Selected Poems.* London: Penguin Books

specific glass/ stolen from Cozinha 212/ Rua dos Pinheiros 174/ Sao Paulo/
from dinner and drinks/with Goia/ and Alexandre/on December 14th 2019 .

What is the work made by the kleptomaniac? Who steals for whom?¹⁰⁰

The intention of meaning/ The meaning taking hold/ the method defying the
intention/ the intention becoming addiction/ the addiction producing a
libidinality/ a pleasure/ the pleasure of repair/ our need to repair/ the desire
to be repaired/ am i alone?/ to repair is our rescue/ our thievery is our
restitution/ i take you back/ by theft/ by sneak/ alone/ for us/ to be together/
to find our new refuge/ to find the space to build refuge/ and in this refuse/
my agency/ to be the restitutive agent/ / without permission/ to desire to
protect this moment/ to hold our moments/ together/ again./ to sustain/ to
be of sustenance/ to have meaning in the interchanges of our words/ your
words/ the words lost in the glass/ stolen from (...)/ our meaning held in
our flight/ the decentred i/ i taken out of the experience of I/ once more/ you
here with me/ i'll give these back/ i promise/ return them to new spaces/ at
later dates/ context for a loss/ addressed to us/ to you/ to the passed/ i know
displacement without having experienced it/ it is passed/ how?/ how do we
pass/ how is it to be passed down/ passed around/ passed with care/ if i
address you/ can you understand the conditions of my care?/ can you see in
the absence of its material?/ in the transparent vessel/ in the empty space/ an
amorphous stage/ you/ and i/ others and other/ we are rearranging this space/
making this space a stage like a home/ the stage to re-animate your voices/ to
speak to us/ again./ addressing us again/ again/ and again/ to say/ your voice
will produce your being/ your voices are here/ in liquids that are not quite
certain of their condition./ that movement of meaning/ that inference of a
relation to space/ to site/ to our having been there/ to our having been/ to
our not being there now/ to now/ to then/ to the last fragment of broken
glass/ rescued/ re-pieced/ returned/ renewed/ restituted/ if only to deepen/
the desire to restore/ and find repair.¹⁰¹

**Proposal to reform the broken windows of Kristallnacht as part of the
continued work of the Unfinished History of Glass Draft no.1:**

The annual date of November 9th marks the anniversary of Kristallnacht. In
2023 it will have been 85 years since the pogrom violently dispossessed and
displaced Jews of their shops, homes and synagogues, their windows smashed

¹⁰⁰ "Love is not absent in the criminal, but it is hidden and buried in such a way that nothing but analysis can bring it to light: since the hated persecuted object of its love and libido, the criminal is now in the position of hating and persecuting its own loved object; as this is an intolerable position all memory and consciousness of any love for any object must now be suppressed." Melanie Klein, *Love, Guilt & Reparation*. (London: Vintage, 1998), p. 260.

¹⁰¹ Paul Zumthor, *Oral Poetry: An Introduction*, Theory and History of Literature, v. 70 (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990).

and destroyed, marking the start of their dispossession from social space, and forecasting the violence to come.

On April 15th, 2021, 72 years after my grandparents fled Vienna at the age of 14 on the Kindertransport, the Austrian Citizenship Act amendment of September 2020 allowed me to file to receive my Austrian passport. The Amendment meant those who could apply were:

All former Austrian citizens as well as persons who were citizens of successor states of the former Austro-Hungarian Monarchy or stateless at the time, but had their residence in Austria, who were forced to leave Austria before May 15, 1955, because they had to fear or even suffered persecution by the NSDAP (National Socialist German Worker's Party) or other authorities of the so-called "Third Reich" or they had to fear or suffered persecution because of defending the democratic Republic of Austria.

All descendants in the direct descending line (children, grandchildren, great-grandchildren...) of the persecuted person (who meets the above-mentioned criteria), including children who were adopted as minors.

This is a major change in the law. Prior to this only those who were directly persecuted could apply.¹⁰²

If after 72 years I can reclaim my citizenship, why should I not be able to reclaim a material?

I propose to repair these windows using the fugitive collection of stolen drinking glasses I have been collecting since February 2018. The intention being to potentially reconstitute the lost windows. Animating glass as an inherited and resonating material.

In this act, the logic is that that which was once stolen and violently taken continues to be withheld from its return. As an inheritor of this history, I wish to insist on my right to repossession through the act of repair. As there is no clear intention for this repair, I steal from public social sites (restaurants, cafes, bars, institutions). Spaces where we can all convene. I invite you to participate if you so choose, to become a corroborator.

This proposal asks if the use of materials can act as a metaphor to access the institution, and to use the institution as a vehicle to ask the question who has the right to steal in the first place? Who has been stolen from? And what is owed to those people who have been stolen from? There are debts to be paid

¹⁰² ktv_creitmayr, 'Austrian Citizenship for Persons Persecuted by the Nazi Regime and Their Descendants' <<https://www.wien.gv.at/english/administration/civilstatus/citizenship/citizenship-ns-victims.html>> [accessed 30 March 2021].

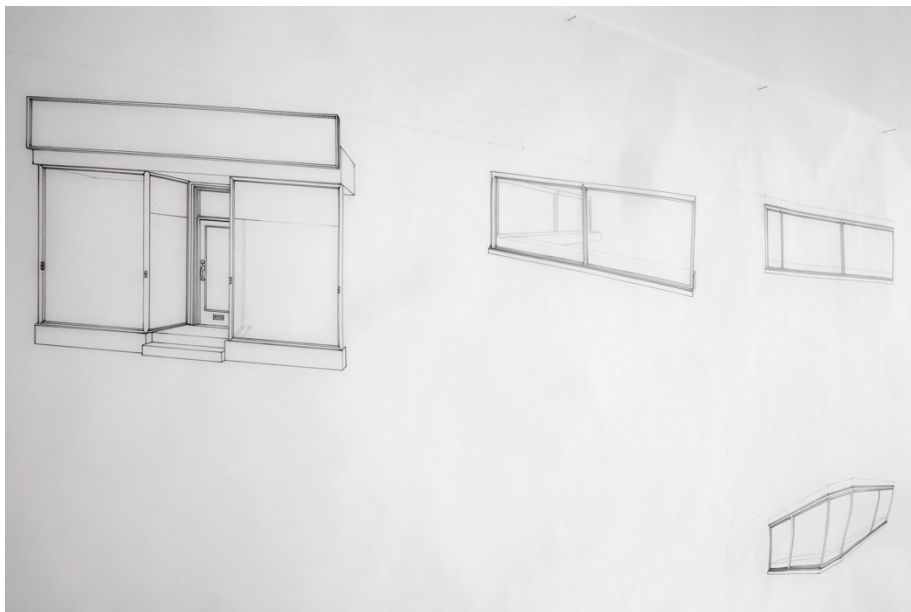
to the displaced. If the discussion will not be had, or is obstructed on how to retribute, repair, or rescue these invaluable material histories then perhaps there are conversations to be had about how the displaced and dispossessed can develop and organise their own constitution.¹⁰³ ¹⁰⁴ Asking the question: who is the law was built for?

¹⁰³ “‘Slap in the Face’: Poland Passes Law Effectively Blocking Holocaust-Era Art Restitutions | The Art Newspaper” <<https://www.theartnewspaper.com/news/poland-blocks-restitution-claims>> [accessed 18 August 2021].

¹⁰⁴ ‘Dutch Court Refuses to Return Painting to Jewish Heirs’, *AP NEWS*, 2021 <<https://apnews.com/article/international-news-museums-amsterdam-netherlands-154f31d925d8f62e038c31df448bfe41>> [accessed 23 May 2022].



(fig.3. Joshua Leon, Proposal to reform, Futura, Prague, Czech Republic, 2021, hand drawn architectural plans, drawn by my father on tracing paper, for three windows from 1938 that were destroyed. A café, a Shop, a Synagogue.)



(fig.4. Joshua Leon, detail of Proposal to reform, Futura, Prague, Czech Republic, 2021, hand drawn architectural plans, drawn by my father on tracing paper, for three windows from 1938 that were destroyed. A café, a Shop, a Synagogue.)

Peggy Phelan would say “All of our deepest questions are addressed to interlocutors who are not here, who cannot hear us. (If we could have a ready response our questions would not be “deep” – what makes them deep is their unanswerability)”¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁵ Peggy Phelan, *Mourning Sex: Performing Public Memories*, 1 edition (London; New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 32.

[8:11am, 15/01/2020]

Is my context contingent, if so, what am i contingent on? Can you produce your own context? Can you exist without context? Can one begin to claim a context?¹⁰⁶ Are contexts pre-determined, given, offered, inherited? loss makes you become, serving to offer my foreignness, to refer to Butler, and allows us to wonder about what our irreducibility might mean in relation to our contexts.¹⁰⁷ Who is it i am beholden to? Responsible for? To whom do i address? If i address the other in me, do i address you?

[2:12pm, 17/01/2020]

This is addressed to you/ To all of you/To the you who comes through me in your words./ To you who speaks to me in your own address/ i am not certain of the tone of my voice./ i work from heaviness to lightness/ Learning to speak from the heart/ and to deliver a message that speaks to you/ to you and only you/ the plural you/ the you as vous/ the you as we./ I want to sound the way you sounded when you were recorded reading *Allerseelen* /All souls (day).¹⁰⁸ / Soft/ silent/ from a darkness./ Or when you wrote of your inability to take yourself out / weak/ worried/ incapable.¹⁰⁹ / Or when you transformed us into the fly / Anxious/ Uncertain.¹¹⁰ / My address will be so/ indirect/ kind/ full of love/ to you/ to us/ to we/ all these glasses/ are addressed to you/ where are your traces if not in the relations we laboured in together?¹¹¹

[7:12am, 22/01/2020]

But what is it to address. To be addressed. To sign the address. To write the address. To think how I can be addressed. To think, who am I addressing? When the songs are written who is it, they have in mind? Or as Celan writes, there are still songs to sing beyond mankind.¹¹² What would it be to be beyond mankind? To be beyond the space that we exist in. In the void that is not yet known. In the home that is not yet built. Or the home that is just a maquette for a home? The songs of our lives that are no longer here. Those who remain, sing to those who are gone.¹¹³ Are the poems written after, the poems of the song? Driving on and on in unrelieved darkness. Dwelling in the darkness of those long gone.¹¹⁴ Is this the beyond you mean?

[10:43am, 22/01/2020]

¹⁰⁶ Leung, Ghislaine, *Partners* (London: Cell Project Space, 2018).

¹⁰⁷ Judith Butler, *Precarious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence* (Verso, 2006). P46

¹⁰⁸ 'Paul Celan "Allerseelen" - YouTube' <<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4TQQmh1xSO8>> [accessed 2 April 2020].

¹⁰⁹ Ibid. Levi.

¹¹⁰ Franz Kafka and Joyce Crick, *The Metamorphosis and Other Stories*, Oxford World's Classics (Oxford ; New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹¹¹ Kafka and Crick.

¹¹² Celan, Paul. "Threadsuns by Paul Celan | Poetry Foundation," *Poetry Foundation* <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/58204/threadsuns> [accessed 7 February 2020] 2014

¹¹³ "For if I am here and there, I am also not fully there and even if I am here, I am always more fully here. Is there a way to understand this reversibility as limited by bodily time and space in such a way that the other is not radically other, and am I not radically over here as I, but the link, the joint is chiasmatic and only and partly reversible and partly not." Butler, J. 2018. *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*, (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press) p120

¹¹⁴ Lamentations 3, sefaria.org. Lamentation (online), Available at: Accessed 21 Nov. 2019

If I could talk to you, I would ask you, who were you writing to?

[6:34am, 23/01/2020]

i am here/ only reading you/ but i read you to know myself/ not to know you/ what is this failure? ¹¹⁵/ i took your shirt/ i ripped it/ as is the way/ i made it so it could not be yours. ¹¹⁶/ i confirmed its failure/ the failure of my theft/ the insecurity of my voice/ at an edge again/ tracing a lineage by way of a floorplan. ¹¹⁷/ i cannot speak to you from the centre/ nor reach to a centre/ in this impossibility/to me/ for us/ for now/ our not hereness/ not ever-ness/ that is not a reality/ the reality of two/ the dance of one/ the howl into the black/ the drip that stains/ liquid without a vessel/ and what were we given?/ what kept us here?/ consumed without consummation/ dispelled from love/ outside again/ seen only from an angle/ so absurd to see/ disguised in assimilation/ again/ over to you/ your absence shall not let me refrain from my resistance/ only in/ and for/ as in/ for sparing us from a kind of loneliness./

[6:59am, 23/01/2020]

...

How can I perform silence? How can I be absent from my own words? Three dots, to mark the space where something is missing.

Will this suffice. Will this say we have been here; we are going to be here; we are yet to attend.

... ¹¹⁸

[7:37am, 23/01/2020]

And where does the personal enter? Is it ever present, a subject, or an author?
We sip in both cups.

[4:18pm, 29/01/2020]

We must remain the subject. The subjective body, the subjective voice, the deeply personal, inter-related, interchanges, of you and i, you and us, us, and us, we, again. ¹¹⁹ Because to resist the prevailing logic of now, is to be a body

¹¹⁵ Ibid. Berlant, p. 126.

¹¹⁶ In the Trial, Joseph K. visits Titorelli in his apartment studio in the hope of gaining some form of information as to the process of his trial and its conclusion. A key moment in understanding how the inner workings of the court are engaging with every member that surrounds it, Joseph K. finds himself caught in a rabbit hole, gaining nothing, and only returning himself back into the system of his subjugation. Upon his arrival in the room, there is "a shirt whose sleeves dangled on the floor." Franz Kafka, and Idris Parry. *The Trial*. London: Penguin. 2004. p113

¹¹⁷ Gillian Rose, 'Architecture after Auschwitz', *Assemblage*, 21, 1993, 63-71.

¹¹⁸ "Teaching encompasses not only language, but also, in a unique way, that which language [das Sprachlose], the silenced, to which mourning belongs. The teaching that is not expressed, nor alluded to in lament, but that is always kept silent, is silence itself. And therefore, lament can usurp any language: it is always the not empty, but extinguished expression, in which its death wish and its inability to die join together. The expression of the innermost expressionlessness, the language of silence is lament." Ibid. Scholem, p. 316.

¹¹⁹ Donald E. Hall, *Subjectivity*, The New Critical Idiom (New York: Routledge, 2004).

and to be a body here and there.¹²⁰ ¹²¹ If we could ever be here and there. In our subjective collectivity we become resistant to systems that attempt to remove us, obscure us, prevent us. Then we can be noise in all its forms. Moving in unpredictable manners, without structure, in fluid. I am the fluid in the glass. The glass is the fluid in me. Connected by our desire to connect beyond sight. By our need to remain social. Living in a manner that is constantly interconnected to then, to now, to our material pasts. The glass is not from somewhere, it was already there. It has been here before. It will always be here. When i am here, they are here too. They call upon my duty. My duty to my other in me.¹²³ They stand in. They speak out. They relate. They intersect with the spaces in which we were. They are us. They are a madeleine. And they are more than a madeleine.¹²⁴ For they are every moment i have shared with you. For they are every moment i have been unable to share with you. They are every sentence i wished you could have spoken, or unspoken, they are the silence between us when speaking was a risk. Informal, unformed, under produced, but precise none the less. In this between of the peripheral notions of my being and your beingness, our voices, and our voices exhaustion, a seeming tirelessness bound to the latent lament song, the oldest song, the one where we remember our home, which is not the desire for home, nor a claim to land, but a need to understand, home goes with us, as our refuge for our state as the refugee and as our desire to need to protect.¹²⁵ ¹²⁶ What would we be without our travels? And then I thought, what is hinted at in the design of the glass?¹²⁷ And the place from which it was taken? Does it infer its own class? Or our aspirational problems? Does this obsession develop a kind of narrative? A history of progressions. A wave form in the mist. Am I transcribing my own progress? What then to progress? What is it to note progress through obsession? There is more to this than i know. Do i create access? What am i accessing? Are there hidden infrastructures? I did not want

¹²⁰ “Logistics wants to dispense of the subject altogether. This is the dream of the new capitalist science.” Stefano Harney and Moten, F. 2013. *The Undercommons: fugitive planning & black study*. Wivenhoe Etc.: Minor Compositions. p 87

¹²¹ “we struggle in, from, and against precarity. Thus, it not from a pervasive love for humanity or a pure desire for peace that we strive to live together. We live together because we have no choice, and though we sometimes rail against that unchosen condition, we remain obligated to struggle to affirm the ultimate value of that unchosen social world, an affirmation that is not quite a choice, a struggle that makes itself known and felt precisely when we exercise freedom in a way that is necessarily committed to the equal value of lives. We can be alive or dead to the sufferings of others – they can be dead and alive to us. But it is only when we understand that what happens there also happens here, and that “here” is already an elsewhere, and necessarily so, that we stand a chance of grasping the difficult and shifting global connections in ways that lets us know the transport and the constraint of what we might still call ethics.” Butler, J. 2018. *Notes toward a Performative Theory of Assembly*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press. p 122

¹²³ Butler, *Prearious Life: The Powers of Mourning and Violence*.

¹²⁴ Proust, Marcel, and Lydia Davis. 2003. *In Search of Lost Time. 1, The Way by Swann's*. London: Penguin.

¹²⁵ “Let’s make a refuge, which we refuse to settle, for which we refuse to settle, within which we can enjoy the refuge to which we’ve long been given. In being visited, in our ongoing defiance of loneliness, maybe they’ll leave us alone.” Moten, F. 2017. *Black and Blur*. Durham; London: Duke University Press. p 172

¹²⁶ Joseph Roth, *The Wandering Jews*, trans. by Michael Hofmann, Revised ed. edition (London: Granta Publications, 2013).

¹²⁷ “Product design, interior design, and installation design are all deeply implicated in capitalist ideology. It’s the primary lexicon for substantiating neoliberalism. It’s the off-the-shelf language of hegemony.” André Rottmann. 2014. *John Knight: Essays and Interviews by Anne Rorimer, Dan Rabam, Benjamin H.D. Buchlob, Kim Gordon, Jay Sansers, Marie-Ange Brayer, Birgit Pelzer, Isabelle Gran, Alexander Alberro, and André Rottman*. Cambridge, Massachusetts; London, England: The MIT Press

all these materials. Some of the spaces i steal from i do not feel welcome. It is a strange interest, to find oneself caught between the desire for more, and the feeling that what might be seen as more, is nothing, the same object, that leads you to places you don't want to be in, that you feel you are not allowed to be in, that do not represent you, that cannot speak to you, nor you to it. This nothingness made meaningful only by a need to steal something back.

[6:35pm, 02/02/2020]

Nothing again, nothing, why is the nothing the space where our fear is exacted? Here take them back. Take this moment back. Return. Do not stop. If design can suggest mechanisms of class, do the glasses that define a space of sociality infer the same kind of power structures? Can our presence disrupt these structures? Or are we subsumed by them? Disturbed by them? Addicted to them?

[8:31pm, 02/02/2020]

i took a glass from the Delaunay Counter, where we had discussed Jung, and his original Christianity, and you were upset, because he was a founding member of A.A., but you didn't want that space to be about God, because it had done you good.¹²⁸ The glass itself is not that remarkable. The place is. It felt like i could remember being in the types of places my grandparents would have enjoyed as kids. i bought a Manner bar to remember them, to remember my childhood of being given the hazelnut and chocolate. And what about the wine glass from Princi, where we ate dinner after the Fischli and Weiss opening? i stole glasses from there to, five of us, eating and talking and thinking, and drinking, and me, realising i had paid too much, and asking for a glass of wine, which is the glass i had to take, to say it was owed to me, but also to ask, what is the real cost, what is the real loss, because where they can, they take it back from you, as debt.¹²⁹ And i realised i had another glass from there, from a rainy day, when i needed to find somewhere to wait for you, so i read Stefan Zweig's *Chess* in one sitting, and when you arrived, you didn't want to stay.¹³⁰ And i was only reading Zweig because B. had told me to when we were at La Perle in Paris, which i later discovered was the site where John Galliano had shouted anti-Semitic remarks at an old couple, and then later claimed he was out of his mind.¹³¹ i stole five glasses there, i felt they were owed to me. All these spaces. All these connections. All this strangeness. And what of Zweig who ended up finding refuge in exile in Brazil, displaced. And this text about other forms of violent torture by the Nazis, on the wealthier,

¹²⁸ C. G. Jung, *The Red Book: Liber Novus*, ed. by Sonu Shamdasani, trans. by John Peck and Mark Kyburz, Box edition (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 2009).

¹²⁹ Maurizio Lazzarato, Joshua David Jordan, *Governing by Debt*, Semiotext(e) Intervention Series, 17 (South Pasadena, CA: Semiotext(e), 2015).

¹³⁰ Stefan Zweig and Anthea Bell, *Chess*, 2017.

¹³¹ "The Unorthodox Chic of Jean Paul Gaultier", *Tablet Magazine*, 2011 <<https://www.tabletmag.com/sections/arts-letters/articles/chai-fashion>> [accessed 27 September 2022].

more secure, Jews, producing under duress another form of insanity, madness, and dehumanisation that remained embodied forever. Locked in a room with nothing, no windows, no tools, no reality, as a precursor to his own haunted existence that led to his suicide.¹³² A legacy is stream of letters, many of which are missing. i remain confused on how to remain in space, handling these ghosts as though they are my siblings.

When will i fail? When will I accept my conditioning? Making such unclear gestures. Living underneath, behind what is seen. In an excess of the word. The unseen. A void. A nothing. I feel this as a constant in my being. While asking who is not seen? What is it to work behind a scene? To work without the technology of my materiality. To labour without showing labour. To make labour material. Considering the conversation as the work. Considering the time spent with you as the space where a work begins. Like Ian Wilson's Discussions.¹³³ Undirected, totally open, peripatetic, conditioned by a history of movement, a sequence of exiles, of being diasporic. A tale that moved from Spain and Romania, to Holland, and Hungary, and Turkey, and Syria, and Yemen, and Egypt and Austria, and then, and then England.

[10:18pm, 24/02/2020]

To be without place, is to be a listener.¹³⁴ This is a refusal to being seen as a single being.¹³⁵

[11:17am, 25/02/2020]

Inside/ inside/ late at times/ early at others/ into the circle/ no other way in/
out/ to do it in time/ to weep/some nights/ but the day goes/ on/ and our
memory ain't but/ ain't but/ a process of sitting/ torn shirts/ a throng of
garments in disregard/ you got your hours/ and your details/ and we sat still
for a little while/ dodging the oncoming/ wound/ the wound that goes and
goes and goes/ passes from one parent/ to the next/ an exit from safe ground/
don't build it if you can't maintain it/ that's what they say/ but we have to
build/ there's nothing else to do/ they get you uprooted/ down playing the
distance/ we are quite close/ performing gestures/ performing our privacy/
performing our personality/ pretty much/ pretty please/ thanks for coming/
let something dissolve in your glass/ let me dissolve into a glass/ the
unstraightening of our line/ hopping/ between/ location/ no place is home/
no place/ like/ home/ no place/ home/ is unknown/ only places/ places we
have been/ we are being in/ we are being un/ under-go/ under as home/ that's
what we know/ like when we get lost in conversation/ and they look at us
like/ what is this all about/ because they don't want to know loss/ they don't
know how to be lost/ what it feels to be lost in your beingness/ you're being

¹³² George Prochnik, *The Impossible Exile: Stefan Zweig at the End of the World* (Granta, 2015).

¹³³ *Ian Wilson, the Discussions*, ed. by Christiane Berndes and others (Eindhoven : [Barcelona] : [Genève]: Van Abbemuseum ; MACBA, Museu d'Art Contemporani de Barcelona ; Mamco, Musée d'art moderne et contemporain de Genève, 2008).

¹³⁴ Amnon Raz-Krakotzkin, 'Jewish Memory between Exile and History', *The Jewish Quarterly Review*, 97.4 (2007), 530-43.

¹³⁵ Fred Moten, *Black and Blur* (Duke University Press, 2017).

there/ or as Cathy Park Hong wrote/To even the youngest planet of powdered
matter: hear my lament,/ As I gawk and rub my hands/ while saline cells slide/
and slide down my sodden face¹³⁶

[03:00am, 26/02/20]

But it was late/ I was tired/ you wanted to work/ your work required talking/
we talked about memory/ and nostalgia/ not as a sadness/ but as an
investigator/ loss as personal detective/ and the turning point/ a celebration
of celebratory moments/ trapped in a bromeliad/ and a glass/ and in this loss
we found time to remember/ when we are happy.^{137 138}

¹³⁶ 'Lamentology : Magazine : A Public Space' <<https://apublicspace.org/magazine/detail/lamentology>>
[accessed 21 February 2020].

¹³⁷ Ibid. Klein. p.362

¹³⁸ G. and I were talking about her painting, and the notion of saudade, which is a word that cannot be translated from Brazilian Portuguese but means something along the lines of longing and love and yearning and joy and situates memory of the past, as ever there was a moment in which languages collapsed.



*(fig.5. Joshua Leon, detail from *An Unfinished History Glass*, performance at South London Gallery, 2020, seven glasses that have been stolen, displayed in a fragile manner on the floor, during the performance of the text *Unfinished History of Glass*, at South London Gallery, during which the audience were placed in a circle of chairs and made to face the walls of the space where the glasses were lying.*

Narrator's guide to reading [2]:

[8:41am, 25/10/2022]

Just after the close of writing the Unfinished the History of Glass, the Covid pandemic hit. Writing became less important, and/or harder.

Somehow time's experience changed, and I found that, in being confined to the home I became silent and stuck. This is why the dates are so distant from one another, and a splintering occurs. My work became fragmentary, writing in a time of silence, was not the same as writing in silence. My tone also changed. The speed of momentum was broken by the speed of daily bodily and emotional management. I tried to be more still. In writing. But also, in place.

There was a brief moment where I was able to move, as the airports re-opened, I travelled to Berlin to perform An Unfinished History for a second time. But as I arrived there the performance was cancelled. It was in this moment that Suzanne, a new friend, with whom I had been messaging during these months, invited me to produce a solo exhibition in her space Daily Practice in Rotterdam. Attendance(s) Close to the Close were the texts that came of this. Each day I wrote, and the next day I would send these correspondences to the space by mail, where Suzanne would await their arrival.

The stillness I had felt became predominant in my thinking as I was consumed by finding some way of producing a lecture in fragmentary form, something that reflected upon the experience of being unable to visit an exhibition that I would produce, and of thinking how to write poetic lectures, how to attend to spaces, people, friendships, days, details when all of this was made distant. As you read this you will note the change. Some texts became shorter than ever. I also became far more available. Each day presented itself as independent from another, and as I worked continuously over eight weeks, my mood and ability to structure sentences was consistently strained and pulled. Memories of lost friends, or of desires, arose and impacted the texts. I worked to hold onto this as a record of a very particular moment where closeness was not permitted.

Attendance(s) Close to The Close

[4:24am, 25/10/2020]

I counted the weeks. They too are lost. I remain as a very precarious subject. So fragile that, were you to break me, I would be lost too. My presence remains outside a window. As close as, when you said, our eyes are meant to see as much as possible. I thought. My eyes, observant as they are, are blind. And such blindness keeps the silence in. Cooped up in these small rooms. We were alone. I was thinking about your voice. Filling the walls. What a state. What a chance. Less visible in this blindness. The moment of being in full flow became a wailing sound. But the walls would not fall. We pointed west. Towards a specific site. The return. You never left. And I remembered when You said, “there is only risk in the material world.”¹³⁹ There is only chance if you have to consider all the consequences. I couldn’t help thinking there are no consequences in a room of one. In times like these I want to be felt, all at once. In the there. The there of the here to come. Whilst waiting to share. Whilst preparing soup. And your question. What chance for posterity?¹⁴⁰ What chance to keep all this? The real work is learning to maintain our minor material means. Padding up our living. Deepening our relation to circumstances. Holding onto our obligations. Clinging to sensation. The smell of rose and coffee. Controlling losses. Resisting tears. Deepening bonds. When we would talk about other things, like our futures, or deepest thoughts. When feelings were more than conditions. All that makes us, us. Who knew thinking about the future was a means for avoiding ourselves? Who knew the past refuses to be lost? Who knew we would be here? Weeping through windows. Making noises that no one hears?

[9:23am, 05/11/2020] The Attendant Gift

I wanted to send you a gift. I spent the last days searching for one that could attend for me. To find a substitute for my lack of attendance. It has become so hard to attend in these days. I don’t even know if I am here for myself anymore. The room feels too close. I keep returning to an image published in the Washington Post of a memorial with only empty chairs, that reminded me of Ionesco’s play.¹⁴¹ It speaks to this. The emptiness of our attendance. No one person next to another, the pressure of being pressed into any situation, gone, dissipated in one swift gesture. But still, I feel this desire to attend. To be there for someone, to arrive in places, to be announced, to be given the license to converse. I then realised. I cannot attend your birthday. Which brought me a

¹³⁹ During the pandemic, the artist Abbas Zahedi and I met consistently and safely as he prepared for an exhibition titled *Ouranophobia* at a space in Chelsea, London. During one of our long conversations, we came to a discussion on risk, and the real concern we both shared that as artists whose practices appear as exhibitions primarily we had no choice but to take risk in unsafe times, and that this risk, of physicality was one of political consequence as only those whose work allowed them to stay at home during this time could do so, this phrase about the material world remains as a trace of these conversations.

¹⁴⁰ “I Feel Like Everything Shouldn’t Exist”: An Interview with Hannah Black’, *Hazlitt*, 2016 <<https://hazlitt.net/feature/i-feel-everything-shouldnt-exist-interview-hannah-black>> [accessed 6 October 2022].

¹⁴¹ M. Eugene Ionesco, *The Chairs*, trans. by Martin Crimp, Main edition (London: Faber & Faber, 1997).

huge feeling of loss. Last year we were able to celebrate together. At our restaurant. With our wine. How do we go about sharing space when we are barricaded from such an act? The gift being the thing that we let go of.¹⁴² Much like the conversation. A confirmation of our arrival. Allowing it to stand in for my body, to work on you as a memory. I think perhaps I have been trying to say this all along; “I am trying to attend to all that stuff that falls out, the excess, the detritus, the little things that normally we only notice later, when you are gone.”

[1:11am, 07/11/2020] The room of Confrontations [after Jabès]

The days are beginning to feel different. Less alone. Even though I am still as alone as ever. I am still in the room of confrontations, waiting for more noise. But there never seems to be noise here. I stole your black coat. You said I should protect myself, and this seemed the best companion. If I can't be with you, why not have a part of you here. Although I wonder if perhaps this time it is I who cannot be with you. Did I mention I have been preparing my talk on the question of attendance? To be honest, I have struggled with structure, as always. It is as though I cannot persuade myself to trap this idea as it seeps into every thought I have. I ask myself, how is it to be there, how come we cannot make more of our moments together? This transitioning between happening and event and back again. I talk aloud to myself. There is no one else with me. Just the small lamp we bought. Although there are many chairs, their legs chopped down.¹⁴³ I sat on the tallest chair I could find, hoping that this would give me a better angle to see if any shadow crosses through the expanse. I whispered repeatedly the words “as long as I am speaking, as long as I am writing, my pain is less keen.”¹⁴⁴ So little comes of it. It is just another justification that I am here, in the room of confrontations, which I would prefer to call the room of conditions. For I know all too well that one leads to the other, and that my talk on attendance hinges on my understanding of the conditions that brought me here. You, of course, know all my conditions already. A lock to my uncut key. Do you believe silence is a form of attendance? Or do we need our body? And what of our ashes? What of those tiny fragments that ask for our words? I sense that my duty is born from this, and that in this time of sorrow and isolation, this duty has come calling again.¹⁴⁵ Although I am not sure I am ready. Do you believe I am ready? You always seem to know what's best for me. Today I say, my question is, the question of attendance. Which is the work of the body that feels. A labour that is rarely acknowledged. A labour that calls the body to interact with objects, to touch them, to care for them, to share them, to gift them. To give them the

¹⁴² Marcel Mauss, *The Gift: The Form and Reason for Exchange in Archaic Societies*, Routledge Classics, Repr (London: Routledge, 2004).

¹⁴³ Maurice Lamm, *The Jewish Way in Death and Mourning*, Rev. ed. (Middle Village, NY: Jonathan David Publishers, 2000).

¹⁴⁴ Ibid. Jabès. p.136

¹⁴⁵ Ibid. Derrida and Lukacher.

opportunity to become a signal to all those who need to be signalled. This is an unforeseen responsibility. Is it not? The state of play feels motivated differently, as though while our bodies were asked to live in isolation, our minds deserted us.¹⁴⁶ Back into the desert.¹⁴⁷ To the place where words break up into letters and symbols. These letters are yours, only yours. I will confront them in the same manner I tend to them. I am here to hear all of them as they pass from your mouth into our hands, before becoming the means for making our signals stand up, alert, aware, and alive to our movements. I will consistently refuse to allow myself to work from distance. I will attend to the bond between us, the way one puts their hand around the candle flame or tends to pieces of broken glass on the floor.

[3:45pm, 08/11/2020] Domestic Poem

the morning run becomes a lung check.
coffee becomes more than ritual.
still in the desert of thoughts.
told I am elsewhere.
then told I am bound to wandering.
a refusal to let distance separate.
duties are completed. clean the stove top.
mind my clumsiness. organise the bookshelf.
overwhelmed by the work itself not the workload.
take the time to think on it.
you still stick around. it helps.
make a plethora of evasive interactions.
tidy the pile of boxes. ice my knee.
read a little. talk more on the phone.
close to the close. the day ends.

[8:46am, 09/11/2020]

Today is eighty-two years since Kristallnacht.

[11:21am, 09/11/2020]

Today is not really happening once. The date returns. I am trapped within the date.¹⁴⁸ This feeling of being in attendance, which becomes the drive that makes me want to be social, to capture all our conversations, to steal, to collect, to keep, to hold, and to remember, is there, inside me. The date is inside me.¹⁴⁹ This sense of the oneness of the day, exists, but it exists only in

¹⁴⁶ "He [Kafka] will push it [language] toward a deterritorialization, even if it is slow, sticky, coagulated. To bring language slowly and progressively to the desert. To use syntax in order to cry, to give a syntax to the cry." Deleuze and Guattari, p. 26.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid. Jabès.

¹⁴⁸ Ibid. Derrida, Dutoit, and Outi Pasanen.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid. Choon.

my being present to all the dates that collide with today. My ability to attend, to be here with you, is set in motion by the date. By the dates within me.¹⁵⁰

[5:19pm, 09/11/2020]

The last time I was in Berlin, I found myself next to the Jewish cemetery yet again. How is it I find myself there every time? I have never planned to visit it. A strange accident, perhaps, or serendipity meeting projection. This last time, the hotel I stayed in was on the same road. I did not even consider this when making the booking. I woke up, walked for thirty seconds and there it was. It made me remember the first time I found it. In the very first days of the year, I had been living there for a few weeks. I was on a long walk, getting to know the place, and found myself looking at this green piece of land. I had no clue what it was. It resonated. A field in the heart of the city. It was locked at the time. I took a photograph. Something went off inside me. I felt it before I knew what it was. Some of the dates inside me felt they were home. They were in attendance. I became an attendant for them. I kept returning. Still unknowing how. Still. How is it that an open space can erode the world of noise? How does space inscribe its meaning in feeling? Caught up in the unseen strands of our bodies, I committed to tending to the unseen actions of us at that moment.

[9:57pm, 09/11/2020]

What does this unseen mean? Who is unseen? What parts of me do I keep from being seen? You must not forget. I must not forget. "Never again" we say. "Never again." But there is more to this. For there are those of us who can refuse to be seen, but there are those of us who still remain unseen, who live and labour without being given a word. We travel. We move. You wait for me to arrive, but who else can we wait for? When we are forced indoors our words do not recede.

¹⁵⁰ Jacques Derrida, *The Post Card: From Socrates to Freud and Beyond* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987).

[12/11/2020] Amit's Question

What's in the suitcase?¹⁵¹

The unopened vessel.

Do we search for ours?

For it was there alone.

How can your voice still be speaking?

You are gone.

did you have this question stored for so long just so it could speak to me from
someone else's mouth?

Now and then. Not again. Always the same.

I try to speak to you.

I tried to be there as you slipped on your chair.

As you threw the glass across the table.

And what's in that tale?

The lonely. The travelling. The immigrant man.

I don't want to be another.

I don't want to carry a suitcase that never opens.

An unforgettable fable.

Take it with you. Keep it with you.

Keep all this noise within you.

I told you I am silent now.

I am in the quietest phase of my life.

Trying to diligently catch up on the reading I should have done.

Making sure to keep all my spaces tidy.

Rediscovering my voice,

for I have lost sight of it,

or have forgotten how to use it.

There is just a dissonance now.

A smallness that keeps me from saying what I need to say.

"You left too soon. Come back."

"You stayed too long. Come back".

¹⁵¹ Arthur Miller, *Death of a Salesman: Certain Private Conversations in Two Acts and a Requiem*, 1st edition (London: Penguin Classics, 2000).

The rooftop has no more balcony.
It is now occupied by others.
I can't look at that view anymore.

I only remember it.

And the heat. And the sand. And the dust. And the stairs.

There were so many questions in that book of questions you had.

There are still so many questions I have for my book of attendances.

Yes, it is a book now.

How many attendances will I have to endure?

How many times will I have to tend to your questions?

Do you need an answer?

I cannot carry them.

I am always in contact with your trace.

A line so thin it falls apart in my hands.

I repaired the shoes you left.

I collected them all into bundles.

There we all are. As other beings. As our former selves.

As our future selves.

What is in my suitcase?

Enough juice to keep us all entertained.

And just enough clothes to know should
the day end we will be fresh tomorrow.

[12:20pm, 13/11/2020]

Today's clothes: a white t shirt, the jumper you gave me, blue jeans. I am wondering does attendance always ask for there to be a host. What if the host is just a room within a building? Someone would still have to open the door. Give the official "hello", something that would explain the manners of the place. No elbows on the table. No trainers. No hats. No talking on phones. I think i will write an invitation that reverses these negations. Something that reads: "You are invited to attend; we await your presence." A generous invite, don't you think?¹⁵²

[2:45pm, 13/11/2020]

¹⁵² International Conference 'Hospitality - Hosting Relations in Exhibitions' and Nanne Buurman, *Hospitality: Hosting Relations in Exhibitions*, ed. by Beatrice von Bismarck and Benjamin Meyer-Krahmer, Cultures of the Curatorial (presented at the International Conference 'Hospitality - Hosting Relations in Exhibitions', Berlin Leipzig: Sternberg Press ; Cultures of the Curatorial, 2016).

You receive us. Host us. Keep us. It feels as though we are moving again. I think I miss dinners looking out onto the rainy street most of all. Everyone else seems to be dreaming of sunnier places. I have never felt an overwhelming desire for the sun. the sun steals the water we store in our backs. I also miss the events. The casual drinks. We always stayed for the drinks. When we could stay. I'm going to prolong all my stays now. Become one of those people who dwells. Is this what it means to attend? A constitution of presence that reflects upon the host within us. You are hosting me in your way. I will host you in return. When the time comes, when the time comes. I have a newfound desire to invite unexpected guests, which I suppose folds back into my love of the invite too. I see the invite as the first moment we become aware of how to attend. Birthdays and later funerals. We are invited. The first birthday I remember is the one where I had my first migraine. The first funeral in my memory I was not allowed to attend. I have missed more funerals than birthdays. I won't miss yours. I will also ensure it is a celebration. Celebrate. Mourn. Be together in both. Be aware of what it is we have. They say there are five stages of grief, but celebration could be the sixth. As with a symphony, there can be moments of ecstasy in between the loss. As with history there is still life within the ashes. I will not accept that we only sit, with low heads, on low chairs, and cry. It will share. Become a reprieve. A cocoon. A cacophony. I want to open the door for all these bodies to attend. I want you, as the host, to invite them to attend. Will you do this for me? Can you do this for me?

[5:32pm, 13/11/2020]

Fumbling with these envelopes that hold these very letters I am sending you. I want them to resist becoming uniform. A desire that I appreciate is the antithesis of how I get dressed. Something in the putting on of one thing, says I must not do the same anywhere else. I arrive nowhere anymore. At my desk I toy with idea of going somewhere. These envelopes are my new suitcase. My words travel better and more than I do.

[8:57pm, 13/11/2020]

the postal workers. transport van drivers. train drivers. pilots.

[7:41am, 17/11/2020] The conversation becomes a theory of travel

I was watching *Who Do You Think You Are?* last night They went to Treblinka.¹⁵³ I held back tears. Who do I think i am, refusing to cry? The last survivor shares my name. I travel in his words. In his name. Take my things, take my objects, let them go, let them make their name too, let them own their name. All these conversations. All these times I attend. I attend even when there is nowhere to attend. Give me a corner and I will tend to it. Give me my

¹⁵³ 'BBC One - Who Do You Think You Are?, Series 15, Robert Rinder', *BBC* <<https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/b0bg638n>> [accessed 23 May 2022].

name, I will tend to it. I stay and I go. You do not see me, but you know I am here, you know I am there.

[2:14pm, 17/11/2020]

How do I travel without travelling?

[3:51pm, 17/11/2020]

But it's not enough is it. To travel without travel. I need more than that. A body needs more than that. My objects are becoming restless. You know well enough they are not mine. I am merely hosting them for the time being. I wonder sometimes if the objects collect me, in the same manner they call to me. The date on my watch no longer moves. The post-its I use to label the glasses I stole are out of order. Dates are missing. Places are missing. People are missing. we are out of sync.

[11:38pm, 17/11/2020]

I fell asleep in your dent on the sofa.

[6:16pm, 18/11/2020]

text motions towards dust.

dust motions towards sand.

sand turns to glass.

our mouths drink.

our ears take sound.

sound motions towards text.

text holds our wound.

the wound motions toward the ground.

the ground passes to waste.

waste seeps into space.

space turns to presence.

presence motions towards us.

[10:19am, 19/11/2020]

Yesterday was not the best day.

[10:37am, 20/11/2020] intergenerational exile

Every morning I wake up and try to retrieve the last thoughts I had before I fell asleep.

[2:08pm, 20/11/2020]

Time ticks on, days pass through. I have been lost in understanding what it means to be conditioned by a state of psychic exile after reading an article concerning this.¹⁵⁴ Exile, it feels, leaves one in-between states of despair and

¹⁵⁴ Eva Hoffman, 'Out Of Exile: Some Thoughts On Exile As A Dynamic Condition', *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*, 46.2 (2013), 55-60.

joy. As you know I have been laying the ground for exploring this space of the in-between for some time. I spent all night thinking it over, exile as an inherited condition, exile as memory, exile as a way of being, or approaching being, and what do we do with the exile once we have established it is our past?

[3:23pm, 20/11/2020]

How then to remain conditioned by exile when exile was never spoken about? These words to you mark time spent thinking about you, even though you weren't here with me, I can conjure you, in the same manner I can conjure the sand and the sky. A groan turns to a word. The word splits the day. Making available a continuum of landscapes. All of which are present within me. When I am at the peak of my attendance, these landscapes continually appear to me.

[4:02pm, 20/11/2020]

There are moments in the day when these images feel like my own memories. Although they are not mine. The scent of my morning coffee carries me somewhere else, releases me. What history does the coffee contain that I cannot access without it? Mahmoud Darwish said, "Coffee is Geography."¹⁵⁵ I wonder now if this is what he meant? That coffee is a ticket, a trigger in the border, a notation on the molecular memory of my being.¹⁵⁶ A ghost I cannot unsee, a ghost I never knew. Run my dear, run, through trees and water, find places where you feel safe once more, find places where you can socialise without threat.¹⁵⁷

[7:17pm, 20/11/2020]

The exile inside begins to speak.

[11:09pm, 22/11/2020]

The most exhausting experience in these times is trying to remain optimistic.¹⁵⁸ You try to convince yourself to keep up the focus, to work, to endeavour, to pursue something. You also appreciate the care and effort all this takes. Our intentions have shifted. Our need to care moves inward. Although I find this idea of care lingers dangerously close to becoming a term of rhetoric, a buzzword rather than an actual way of being. Its appearance seems more and more commonplace, and I worry it too will become another empty mantra our institutions use rather than practice. We are now called upon to pay greater attention to one another, to be in attendance to the person in the distance. So isolated from one another, so removed from bodily contact, overwhelmed by the spaces that should be the spaces where we relax,

¹⁵⁵ Ibid, Darwish. p.20

¹⁵⁶ Deleuze and Guattari. p.16

¹⁵⁷ On a recent trip to Munich, Germany, [08/2022] I became aware that Dachau, the camp where my great grandfather had been interned was close by. As I left the city, heading to Berlin, I began seeing figures running through the forests out the window. The remain with me now that I am back in London.

¹⁵⁸ Ibid. Berlant.

where we find our comfort. If I ask for you to attend to me, I must be prepared to attend to you, which in turn returns me to the home. To my private space. You must be aware of this. I write to you from my home, and I treat any invitation of yours as though it too comes from your home. My words inhabit a space that I am yet to arrive in. I have tried to be aware of this. To be aware that my words can become my body. And yet I cannot think a sentence without dealing with its consequences, but you must know that was not my intention. I wanted only to speak candidly with you, but these consequences have become my duty. It feels I have a greater duty to my words, which is to say I have a debt to the gift, to language as a gift, and as such that which attends. Yet I cannot attend your space. I waste time walking instead of managing the loss I feel about this. I am transfixed by the book you recommended me. The book of Questions, within which is the book of the Absent. It talks so much of being in the desert.¹⁵⁹Am I in a desert? It is so quiet. We have spent too long overcoming distances already, that I only desire to find some means for arriving. A formulation of constant arrival. I really want to turn up. To be somewhere. At an event. Collecting air. Stealing objects. Ordering ephemera. Unpicking and repairing threads.

[5:18am, 23/11/2020]

Everything starts but does not want to conclude.

[9:03pm, 24/11/2020]

This is a space for you to get close to me.

¹⁵⁹ Ibid. Jabès.

[9:13pm, 24/11/2020] [Socialising [2]

[meal no.2 – Grandma's ful]

3 cloves garlic

1 teaspoon cumin seeds, freshly toasted

Kosher salt

2 (15-ounce) cans fava beans

3 tablespoons tahini

2 to 3 tablespoons lemon juice from 2 lemons, or more to taste



(fig.6. Attendance(s) Close to the Close, Daily Practice, Rotterdam, 2020-2021, display as orchestrated by Suzanne Weenink upon receiving each letter daily. Objects, including the glass of coffee and the apple were slowly inserted into the space as a reflection on performative actions I asked Suzanne to conduct in her space. One of which included sweeping the floor each day. As the days unfolded, so too did the exhibition, filling up. The postal system becoming our bond.)

[11:29am, 25/11/2020] Keriah

Things are slow. I am trying to unpick all our threads. There are so many. Every time I pull one, I find another that seems vital, urgent even. You spoke once of this search for fragile violence, for something that holds things together loosely. I feel I have become loosely put together. Like all these parts seem to fall out of me. Do you know this feeling? I wondered how we could make this become our thing, how we could find a way to make things loose and strong at the same time. Threads became actual threads. Strands of fabric strewn across my floor. Abandoned, then recollected.

[11:37am, 25/11/2020]

It's as though everything has become a process of being unmade. Of asking oneself to understand how what you touch is made up of palpable wounds, a history of things inherited and held onto, that are still unfolding, still revealing themselves. Whilst at the same time also searching for materials from our history that could speak to yours and my absence. If we cannot attend, I thought, perhaps objects could, and in this case words. Although I see these words as objects. They too are material.

[12:15am, 25/11/2020]

circulations to threads to bonds to exchange to connections to distance to absence to closeness to sewing to repair.

[7:16pm, 27/11/2020]

Still, I go on, piecing together a jigsaw, threading our bonds.

[8:12am, 01/12/2020]

I open my mouth. But you are not here. So what use is the sound of my voice?

[9:27am, 01/12/2020]

Do I speak just to remember?

[11:06am, 01/12/2020]

I remember looking at a vitrine of liberation gifts.¹⁶⁰ Cigarettes. A Penknife. A toothbrush. I thought, is this it? But also felt amazed at how they had been kept, how long they were protected, cherished. They looked so thin, at breaking point. It seems so hard to be constitutionally fragile. There are no objects that do not also refuse attending, for all objects are bound to their attachments. Just like us. Just like us.

[1:13pm, 01/12/2020]

My voice is attached to yours. My voice comes to the space. But it is the silence that surrounds us now, the silence that speaks for me, I have abdicated presence. We will be conversing soon. Sharing our little anecdotes, and glasses of wine and water. And when I get home each evening, I will make sure to

¹⁶⁰ In late 2018 I visited the Jewish Museum in London with an old friend. We walked through their Holocaust collection, and there in an upright vitrine were some gifts that a survivor had received when the camps were liberated. I took a photo, but mostly I just stood frozen.

write a note which states: A conversation happened at said place, followed by the date.

[6:32pm, 02/11/2020]

Touched and touched over and over again.

[10:19 am 03/12/2020]

The act of attendance is the gift.

[7:35am, 05/12/2020]

We spoke on Zoom last night. It was nice to hear your voice. To see your face. To remember something close to closeness. It still surprises me how fast we absorbed these tools. A part of us. A part of how we behave. But there is no way of conditioning that space. Look what we want to do, to become the ultimate host, to let our spaces speak for us. For our spaces speak. Silently. Quietly. Ragingly. The spaces we inhabit are the hosts. I realise now I can only make space for these ghosts. I wonder more and more if I can ever become the host in fact, whether my recipes for communion do much in the way of asking us to acknowledge these whispers. Yet in these new tools there are no conditions. I fear their exact nature destroys our freedom. I fear that my need for real voices diminishes my relation to the voices we cannot hear. I am taking my time to situate myself in the historical inheritance, while awaiting the coming holidays. Some much-needed days of togetherness. Opening my hands to the winter chills and the light touch of rain.

[11:12am, 06/12/2020]

It is said that we share two sighs. That these sighs, the sighs of nostalgia, set in motion the feeling we have for return. You used to speak at length about nostalgia. Did you have this feeling too, the feeling for return?

[12:24pm, 06/12/2020]

How would the one who returns attend?

Would the others look at them with love?

[2:34pm, 06/12/2020]

If we feel this need for return, then do we not forego our right to stay? Both remain as cycles of their own production. If I search for the space of convergence I return to a border, a space that no longer bears the resemblance of any known place. This border is the refusal of the centre. This space we have chosen to attend to must be reconstituted to relate to this border. It must be built through refusals and upheavals of the pre-existing system. Let it be filled with smells, and stuff, and forgotten moments, fill it with returns, consider it an expanding glass.

[5:39pm, 07/12/2020]

I invite you to touch everything.

Your hands are the clause that produces our arrival, and our return.

[12:39pm, 09/12/2020]

A body is a house for a thousand voices.

[8:25pm, 10/12/2020]

The first night.

[9:25am, 11/12/2020]

The second day.

[11:14pm, 12/12/2020]

The question of attendance is a question for the attendee, it is addressed to the attendant. As I am not present, I cannot know what the feeling of being in attendance is. I cannot share a moment with you. As our bodies brush past one another. Navigate the room. You are the attendee; you must ask yourself about your presence. About your ability to be there, for there are those who cannot be there. In the act of being there, there is always room to leave for these bodies, these spirits, these voices. Here I am, once again, summoning ghosts, asking for the intangible, the unseen, the border, as though it were possible to see this. It is not. Our attendance. Your attendance is the only means for acknowledging these impossibilities.



(fig.7. Joshua Leon, Attendance(s) Close to the Close, Daily Practice, Rotterdam, 2020-2021, display as orchestrated by Suzanne Weenink upon receiving each letter daily. Here the box of matches used to light candles for Chanukah and the used matches were allowed to enter the space at her discretion, while a pack of sweets I was giving by a friend, were sent to her as a gift to the space.)

[7:12am, 13/12/2020]

Pour the remnants of your morning coffee in a glass each day as a reminder for those who can't be here.

[9:25pm, 14/12/2020]

The fifth night.

[9:15am, 15/12/2020]

The sixth day.

I sense a certain silence approaching. The streets seem emptier by the day. As though the community is mourning all at once. So, I too am trying to remain soft in how I approach the world. You asked me once when I became so attuned to absence, and I wonder if I am capable of really attending to absence. I wonder if I could ever really answer this question. For absence demands a patience that carries over long durations. But I try. I stay awake. As I walk, I ask myself to connect intimately with the ground, so that this connection will seep into all my other connections. My attention never fades. I listen even as I speak. The silence creeps up on us. It stands. Attending the lives that we cannot touch.

[9:25am, 16/12/2020]

The seventh day.

The flow and interchange of daily feelings challenge the quietness.

[9:25am, 17/12/2020]

The eighth day.

[8:57pm, 18/12/2020]

The lights go out.

[10:45pm, 20/12/2020]

Do you ever feel that you are clawing the days back?

[6:15am, 28/12/2020]

Where have the days gone? Where have the moments alone gone? Are you still attending to our candles? Still looking after the detritus, we make. I hope you are. I am trying to mirror you, mimicking what you do. Conjuring a feeling of attendance in two spaces at once. And, if this cannot be attained, then attending to each of our selves. I count dates. I also lose track of them, even though I practice routine. My back aches. My legs feel underused. My eyes are sore. Yet this routine, these rituals, help. They keep me present. Attending to the day. Attending to the hour. Attending to the ghosts.

[9:59am, 29/12/2020]

A short sentence sends the conversation into havoc.

[1:12pm, 30/12/2020]

Here is what I know about attendance after all this. The first instance is at school, when the teacher would call our names. The first time they do this they always make some mistakes, then gloss over them as if a name is no matter. The second attendance made is at temple, where no register is taken, but you are noted for having been there on all the important days and for each individual's rite of passage. The third is the first funeral. I don't remember being at the first funeral. My grandfather's. Only at the event afterwards. Scurrying under the table to share snacks with my cousin. These are formal attendances, but the form of attendance we are dealing with here asks us to attend more deeply to the day to day, to the time you wake up, to the time you sleep, to the minutiae details in what you ate and what you did. We are also checking in more with our state of mind. Rethinking more. Exercising for health and boredom. This is what I know about attendance. To be in attendance requires boredom. The boredom of waiting in line, of standing there quietly listening as two magpies collect their twigs, or two friends socialise. And within these moments, there is a weight of melancholy. Not the tragic melancholy that dramatizes a simple event. No. The melancholy of waiting. The melancholy of knowing that this conversation however insignificant won't last longer than a few minutes. So, we talk longer, deeper, more furiously than ever. Here is what I know about attendance. Those who attend are singing on the inside. Those who attend know the tunes of sad songs that speak to many without ever knowing how. That is what I learnt about attendance.

[8:24pm, 31/12/2020]

A year is a short time.

A year is a long time.

A year can arrest you.

A year can demand more of you.

A year ago, I was drinking with you in a bar.

A year before that I was dreaming in the sun.

A year whispers.

A year screams.

A year asks for silence.

A year demands early mornings.

A year goes.

Unforgotten.



(fig.8. Joshua Leon, Attendance(s) Close to the Close, Daily Practice, Rotterdam, 2020-2021, installation view of the exhibition with the final display of letters and objects as orchestrated by Suzanne Weenink.)

Slow Time

a slow marching pace, usually 65 or 75 paces to the minute: used in funeral ceremonies

Slow time in its original definition comes from military funeral marches. Literally it is a slow marching pace, usually 65 or 75 paces to the minute, but I want to reframe this, or perhaps borrow it is more accurate, as a method for work that thinks about how a body moves and interacts within space and material. How I interact with others. You see, slow time, is to the process of asking for time, resisting against total consumption. Grief slows time down. The funeral march being slow might be a metaphor for this. The work I am developing here becomes the same. Everything becomes contingent on a history of bodies in the ground, of attending to absences, of knowing that here in this very space where you're reading these words there are centuries of silence. I write this knowing that you will read it in the future, that in the time in-between, I will find, touch, and manifest materials that will exist in between us. I want you to know these materials are residues of my passage through these spaces. To pass through slow time is to pass through spaces. It is like being an experiential slug. Slow time germinates our feelings. Look how the sludge in your mug of coffee is swilling. You welcome in these spaces too, a corroborator to the silence.

Shiva

The shiva is the site for the failed proposal, it functions as an anti-event in what can be perceived as a sequence of events. Yet when we reside in the space of the shiva we enter the space of duration without form, of the performative broken from any form of performance. There is no theatre to the space of the shiva, merely a consistency of gestures and procedures. As such we find an emergent system of how to behave, how to be, and furthermore how to release.

We do not come to be seen there, we come to spend time there, and it is in the slow time of the shiva that our voices and behaviours congeal and begin to appeal to our grief's desire to find forms. It is under this shift away from the optics of being seen, to be present to the affects of being present that the shiva presents itself as a model.

But what defines an anti-event? What are the conditions that allow the shiva, which is the site of grieving counsel, to become a refusal of the event, and what does refusing the event mean? And if the shiva is an anti-event, then must we ask what are the means for refusing the event?

The shiva begins:

“as soon as the mourners demonstrate formal acceptance of mourning by removing their shoes and sitting on a low bench or stool.”¹⁶¹ These formal gestures produce the situation, once they have begun the shiva continues for seven days, functioning as a space for thought, conversation and, in a traditional setting, prayer. In so doing the shiva becomes a durational model of lament, within which further gestures of preparation and maintenance are undertaken through a continuous system of reorganising and anticipating the next day. This method of making the space feel anew each day, allows the thoughts of each day to pass through the space, and for the host, who is the family of the deceased, to allow those who wish to share in their grief to hold space with them. The family lies at the core of the shiva, and as such takes on the role of host. They become the host that accepts all into their home. This tolerance for all is what sets the shiva apart as unique experience, and what underlies the work undertaken within the shiva. In order to attend to the lost, one must be allowed to enter within the shiva, and for this to happen the host must welcome you, the host must invite you.¹⁶²

¹⁶¹ Ibid. Lamm, p. 81.

¹⁶² Ibid. Mauss, p. 51.

This notion of welcoming and inviting evokes Derrida's notions of absolute and unconditional hospitality:

“...it seems to dictate absolute hospitality should break with the law of hospitality of right or duty, with the “pact” of hospitality. To put it in different terms, absolute hospitality requires that I open up my home and that I give not only to the foreigner (provided with a family name, with the social status of being a foreigner, etc.) but to the absolute unknown, anonymous other, and that I *give place* to them, that I let them come, that I let them arrive, and take place in the place I offer them, without asking of them either reciprocity (entering into a pact) or even their names. The law of absolute hospitality commands a break with hospitality by right, with law or justice as rights.”¹⁶³

This necessary disavowal of the right to or of hospitality, that removes the guard between the host and the other, is what we find within the shiva, transforming the experience into a site, and a site that can move.

In looking at the shiva as a moving site, we can also understand its function, that finds its form through the build-up of a quiet exhibition of intricate and subtle behaviours and rituals which invite the other in and invite space for absence to be held.

To allow for the release of grief, and this absence to be held, small, intimate, gestures are made to maintain the space within the space of a shiva; from *Keriah*, the tearing of the shirt, to laying the table each morning for the guests, to moving furniture. These simple tasks form a body of functions that give access to the demand of the space to become a space for the absent, and for their absent to become present in the words and bodies of those who can attend. Through the maintenance and consistency of gestures situated within the shiva's time passing a residue appears that is allowed to exist within the space, constantly articulating a demand to a kind of servitude or being in service without return. And although there is no return, we persist to situate ourselves in this time-based practice of care, engaging with the questions of what happens when we enact gestures over time? And how do these gestures amass and articulate absence? It is time's passing that brings these questions to the surface, but it is also time's passing that provides an opening for one to come close to answers to these questions. It is subtle work as the force behind repeating these actions in singular moments within a specific time frame refuses any desire for acknowledgment. Rather these are performative actions

¹⁶³ Ibid. Derrida and Dufourmantelle, p. 25.

that must take place and are often enacted in silence. They provide the framework for caring for the site.

The shiva is also situated in the space of the unsayable. When we talk of the unsayable, we talk specifically of our acknowledgment that certain things must remain in silence, that affects take time to appear, that the work of slow time is the work of waiting, and that this work demands we do not point at an event and demand it explain itself. This is the work of respecting the absent. And what makes the shiva an anti-event is its refusal of the notion that precedes most events which “implies surprise, exposure, or the unanticipatable.”¹⁶⁴ It is a specific refusal, in that grief, a subject that weighs heavy, is asked to be our focal point, and yet that grief may not be forthcoming in its expression. Our duty is to respect this, and not demand anything of our grief. Rather we prepare the space, sitting within it. We work through the space. We situate ourselves around others. And we allow the unsayable to be spoken by way of the things that remain unspoken. It is a practice of listening to the in-between, and to achieve this we must not call up the history of the event, or even invoke the conditions that would task the shiva with being an event. Instead, we accept that we exist in a liminal space for the duration of the shiva, and we allow the liminality of our feelings to be expressed.

If we then expand the notion of the shiva as an anti-event out of the singular Jewish grieving ritual, we find artists who work with the framework provided within the site of the shiva. For example, the artist Laurie Parson:

“as part of the exhibition ‘1968’ at Le Consortium in Dijon, in 1992, she had a weekly bouquet of flowers sent to the desk of Irène Bony, the institution’s administrator. (Parson’s name was not mentioned on the announcements, but the flowers could be seen from the exhibition space through the office door.)”¹⁶⁵

This performative action by Laurie Parsons that remained unannounced and was situated in a space of care and consideration for another is a clear articulation of the maintenance situated within the shiva. It is akin to laying the table each day for the guests or lighting a candle each night. This work of gesturing to the situation of time’s passing is a means for allowing the lament held within the site to appear. Parsons’s flowers are not intended to be conceived of as an artwork placed on show, nor are they delivered to an audience as a spectacle or event, instead they are laid out in the periphery of

¹⁶⁴ Jacques Derrida, ‘A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event’, *Critical Inquiry*, 33.2 (2007), 441–61.

¹⁶⁵ ‘Laurie Parsons’s “A Body of Work 1987” - Criticism - Art-Agenda’ <<https://www.art-agenda.com/criticism/285114/laurie-parsons-s-a-body-of-work-1987>> [accessed 16 March 2022].

the goings on, and work with an array of attendees to uphold the work. Such work tasks itself with attempting to speak to the labourers of a place. And what becomes apparent, as is the case with the shiva, is that in order to be in attendance for the absent, from the lost, to those who cannot attend for any number of other reasons (migration, disability, etc.), a labour is required in the spaces which are not conceived of as spaces of performance and exhibition. The shiva therefore, demands constant labour, and relies on the interdependency of others labouring together to enable it to find any kind of potency for those who attend.

I would like to use the terms of performance and exhibition as these terms, although more commonly situated in art practice, can be used as expanded notions to articulate that the work of maintenance and caring are constant, urgent, and ongoing, and that the language of that which is seen, the language of optics, dominates our reading of the event. Yet the shiva refuses this notion, and so do the performative and exhibitionist qualities it holds. The shiva, refuses the idea that that which cannot be seen, or that which is happening within the edges is invalid, instead subtly guiding our attention to what is occurring in those spaces, attuning us to what is incrementally amassing, and what is speaking in the space of the unsayable. Understanding the shiva means understanding that grief is happening in these edges, and that by holding or employing the shiva, we 'mark time' to situate ourselves within this grief, to speak of this grief, to lament this grief, before carrying these tools with us as we become *within* other spaces. It is the site of conversation without return. All we are doing is preparing a space for conversation to happen, a conversation that has no clear direction, by taking on the responsibility of the host who answers to all.¹⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶ Derrida, Jacques, 'A Certain Impossible Possibility of Saying the Event', *Critical Inquiry*, 33.2 (2007), 441-61

The Fragment's Ghost returns

[9:19am, 02/01/2021]

Benjamin's arcades project in the contemporary is a fragmented understanding of migrant and diasporic displays occurring on high and back streets that are being dissolved and developed constantly.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁷ Benjamin, Walter, *The Arcades Project*, trans. by Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002)

[7:22pm, 03/01/2021] Socialising [3]

[meal no.3 – chicken salad]

[Three chicken breasts

Lettuce unwashed

Tomatoes

Olive oil

Balsamic vinegar

Shallots

Salt

Pepper

Olive oil]

Days into the New Year I received a call from my close friend [who wishes to remain unnamed] that he had lost his father to suicide. I was still deep in work for Attendance(s). The pandemic meant that the borders to France, where he was, were closed to pretty much anyone, and so travelling to the funeral to be there with him was impossible. The next chapter, A Smuggler's Guide to Loss, begins in this moment, as both a continuation of the work that was happening for Attendance(s) Close to the Close and as a means of getting across the border without using my body. I was halted by the incident. It felt that I had no tools to aide my friend in his grief. And in this stasis the only tool to express my love was to write. In later conversations, my friend felt perhaps I had used the situation to further myself over his grief. And I was deeply hurt to hear this. Had I been able to travel perhaps this forthcoming chapter would never have existed. The difficulty of conversing in the pandemic, and the distance it produced, was that writing, even for a writer, couldn't achieve what physical contact can. But, I felt, it was the best method I had to approach the subject.

Sometime soon after beginning to write this chapter I was invited to prepare and read this text for the Pogo Bar Podcast produced by KW Institute, Berlin. As I worked it became clear that I needed to begin to see my writing as correspondence and from this as a means of smuggling words and letters across borders. If I could do this, I could extend the voice of care that is situated within the practice beyond the body. As I stated in An Unfinished History of Glass, I felt a deep urge to remove my body from the performativity of my work, and to allow text and voice to perform. The podcast served as a space to explore a new limit in this development. And what became clear is that by removing the body, the I of the self reaches a potential of being an I which is more multiplicitous and allows other voices to inhabit the space of the speaker, and that when this work begins, the body, becomes a site of the archive and the voice its means of making visible that which is held within it. The podcast can be heard here:

<https://soundcloud.com/pogo-bar-podcasts/joshua-leon-smugglers-lament>

A Smuggler's Guide to Loss

[9:12am, 04/01/2021]

We spoke on the phone two nights ago. You asked about how we deal with low feelings. Of the points when one feels they are a failure to themselves. You mentioned your father, your worries. You asked if perhaps he felt he had never felt to be the man he wanted to be. Which made me think about how we come to be in attendance to who we are, to where we are, to what we are? You wondered if this was a question of being present. Words and letters matter most in these instances. Our memories begin with words. Our stories trapped in objects, that unfold the gestures we use to maintain these fragile and necessary relations.

[1:05pm, 04/01/2021]

Attendance is a chain of personal relations.

[2:22pm, 04/01/2021]

A queue of bodies lining up to rest their arm on the one in front.

[3:12pm, 04/01/2021]

Dealing with the affects of their histories.

[4:49pm, 04/01/2021]

Using their spare hand to encourage growth from the ash.

[4:57pm, 04/01/2021]

A physical bond that manifests itself in non-material ways.

[5:04pm, 04/01/2021]

But dust and air are materials too.

[5:31pm, 04/01/2021]

And roses and monuments grow in places where we never expect.

[5:48pm, 04/01/2021]

Our bodies are these roses and monuments.

[6:03pm, 04/01/2021]

This is what we are attending to now. The body that rests is remembered by the body that stands in line breathing air, sharing words, inscribing letters, and ensuring the days that pass, are made up of details that allow spaces to be filled and thoughts to grow. I attend in the remnants of my presence at the same time as I enact my presence.

[9:43am, 11/01/2021]

A close circuit of relations waiting attentively for closeness.

[10:20am, 13/01/2021]

The words do not come to me. A sadness creeps in. The cold bites at my bones. Your fortune is presented in kind gestures. I hear whispers that the news will not be good. We present iterations of care. A boundary surrounds

the attendees. So, we sit on every chair the house has to offer. Mop the floor. I iron the sheets. A solitudinous feeling compounds the future. I return to preparing the notes for a future event, becoming a site for the setting of my first play, in which unnamed bodies delicately manage a void, the void left by the body who cannot attend. This situation opens itself to those who wish to enter. Everybody is welcome. Every, body is welcomed. A selfless host. A sonic temperance washes the ground. The ground lifts its ears. I dip my ear towards the noise, only to hear the meaningful dull of those who ask for the right to not have to speak.

[5:07pm, 14/01/2021]

I attempted the dance moves you sent me, but my coordination failed, so now I am picking up the shards of a broken glass and tiptoeing around the room.

[7:09pm, 14/01/2021]

“Try lying on the floor. It is good for the back. Try bending down. It is good for the knees.” You said. Who knew energy was not internal but reflective? Who knew the longer we remain in one place the longer we are left questioning our attachment to anywhere?

[11:38am, 20/01/2021]

The gift I said I would send you, all those months ago, did it arrive? Broken or not it will do its due diligence if you ask it to. Take care when handling it, as its fragile state makes its edges more dangerous.¹⁶⁸ Know that it is addressed to you, only you, only ever you. The winter tiredness will creep up on us soon enough. We will need each other. All these words are meant to address that. The gestures we enact are there to tend to the spaces we cannot attend to even if we tried, for we cannot stand in one place like statues. And I never have found a statue that knows how to attend the way wind, rain, and silence do.

[5:19am, 21/01/2021]

Our attendance is a trace, existing for just enough time for our bodies to begin to enact the gestures that pertain to living. The everyday tasks of managing the details, of making time, of preparing breakfast, lunch and dinner, of breathing, of listening, of talking, of reading and thinking, of walking, bathing, and sleeping, of cleaning and tidying, and of observing all the spaces that constantly worm their way in between this. I am working to find a means to make this work, the work of attendance, work for us, so that when we need it, we can live side by side with the spirit within and the ghosts that we are yet to know.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid. Mauss, p.31.

[3:28pm, 22/01/2021]

I carry you in a small bag at all times, an inscription on my hip.

[7:41am, 03/02/2021]

Even from this enforced distance I want to carry this weight for you. A rock on our shoulders.¹⁶⁹ Together we move. Flowing in oily liquid. Cooking quiet dinners. I read of falling olive trees in one of my generational homelands.¹⁷⁰ And ask if it is their time too. I wonder if in our slow motion, carrying one another, we would have been able to save them. I think how I could smuggle them to new sites. Make them stand again. Standing for the unfallen. Liquidating their centuries of knowledge annually.¹⁷¹ Touching radial arteries. When the time comes, we will converse in great detail. The way trees converse in great detail under the soil. Our touch is a conversation of centuries. The conversation passes its goods between people without detection. A subtle contraband of loss.

[10:15am, 13/02/2021]

The last few days I returned to Rogoff's theory of smuggling, wondering if this could provide the pathway to access the unresolved histories I am dealing with and the methods I want to create.¹⁷² Such as new ways of receiving guests, where an awareness of the constant exchange that formulates the means of existence when residing at the edge can be expressed. As you know I always wish to remain in proximity to the periphery. To refuse the centre. And I will, I promise, speak more of this refusal but at a later time, as for now, I must insist we work on becoming the smuggler, which means understanding that our bodies are contraband too, that our bodies, these intergenerational containers, carry with them the contrabanded knowledge passed between us. A language so deeply woven in, that to be able to speak it, write it, transcribe it, means reformulating it, or perhaps even rediscovering it, so as to re-invent it. Our languages are not as old as we think. They too needed re-invention.¹⁷³ Lost in their way through the years of migration and movement, of being contraband, the language we use and the language we desire are now embedded in formulations of the place we have adopted. I read of the crypto-Jews and their encoded tongue, Judezmo, a dialect formed out of exile, and necessity, where every original word is hackneyed and reworked, where a constant awareness of threat becomes a lyric to warn friends, this is the smuggled

¹⁶⁹ Albert Camus, *The Myth of Sisyphus: Penguin Great Ideas*, 1st edition (London: Penguin, 2005).

¹⁷⁰ 'Century-Old Olive Trees Felled as Spain's Farmers Try to Cut Costs', *The Guardian*, 2021 <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2021/mar/12/century-old-olive-trees-felled-as-spains-farmers-try-to-cut-costs>> [accessed 10 August 2021].

¹⁷¹ 'Days of Wine and Olives: How the Old Farming Ways Are Paying off in Spain', *The Guardian*, 2021 <<http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2021/aug/10/days-of-wine-and-olives-how-the-old-farming-ways-are-paying-off-spain-aoe>> [accessed 10 August 2021].

¹⁷² Ibid. Rogoff, Irit.

¹⁷³ Richard Michelson and Karla Gudeon, *Language of Angels: The Reinvention of Hebrew: A Story About the Reinvention of Hebrew*, Illustrated edition (Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge Publishing, U.S., 2017).

tongue.¹⁷⁴ To find my own language I have had to use the languages in place, to invert and covertly suggest their failure. Rogoff writes “we begin to recognise that the traces are everywhere, that our daily urban environment is fully inhabited by them, that those who are not recent immigrants also inhabit the sign systems of displacement and can read them, are habituated to them, quite as well as they can, their familiar inherited ones. This is an act of smuggling, an embodied criticality acting outside structures of representation and objectification.”¹⁷⁵ If ideas, as Rogoff understands them, are traces, then I want to dare to say that the language embedded in my body is a trace too. For I desire to be understand how I am trace of migrations, or even that I am the constitutional product of migrations. Yet, in saying this, I produce an encounter with the law, encountering the very articulation of who the law is for, who the law allows to exist, or even who the law dares to see.¹⁷⁶

[3:09pm, 13/02/2021]

Our conversations are contraband.¹⁷⁷ I am entrusting you as their keeper. I ask in our exchanges for you to care for these words, these invitations, and proposals, as materials, because I have been conditioned to be on the move, and therefore I cannot, and may never be able to guarantee their safe storage. Yet this binding together is what enables us to find each other. A vulnerability that demands interdependency. And it is this very vulnerability that fascinates and holds me. For I see how each conversation is a transaction of it, a subtle economics of friendship, a quiet system of gesture, and the responsibility of hospitality. Within each smuggler’s mindset, is the awareness of their participation in a quiet community, and their need for refuge. Every refusal asks for safe refuge. And so, once we know that we are offered refuge we can think about trading in the spaces that exist in the periphery of a regular economics, the ‘centrist economics’ that demands we all behave and move towards the same goal, the same aspirations. An economics which benefits a particular kind of practice, where a certain illegal legality is maintained whilst another kind is regarded as threat. I am this threat. You are this threat. These ideas are this threat. Our grief is this threat. And when you and I encounter spaces, these threats demand action. Yet it is quiet work. These actions are not announced. It is work that attends to the storages of silences produced within. Grief is *within*. And I am attending to yours, so it does not express itself without an ear.

¹⁷⁴ David M. Bunis, ‘Judezmo: The Jewish Language Of The Ottoman Sephardim’, *European Judaism: A Journal for the New Europe*, 44.1 (2011), 22-35.

¹⁷⁵ Ibid. Rogoff, Irit. p.6

¹⁷⁶ “Do I have my passport? Do I exist without it?...If legitimate papers are not immediately available, the someone must counterfeit them. The means to produce passports confers almost magical powers on those who manufacture them.” Marks, p. 65.

¹⁷⁷ Barbara Kirshenblatt-Gimblett, “Contraband:” Performance, Text and Analysis of a “Purim-Shpil”, *The Drama Review: TDR*, 24.3 (1980), 5-16 <<https://doi.org/10.2307/1145305>>.

[9:17pm, 17/02/2021]

Will there be a mass vigil once this is over?

I have been lighting candles when no one is looking.

[3:03am, 22/02/2021]

These dates, these times counting them, for rhythm, for routine. To remember that days have passed and still the absence remains. Still the ones we have lost can never return. So, we return over and over again to the date. A secret to our silence. The toast burns on the uneven days. This day and that day, they are significant. I called your phone. Making out that libations would whimper off and my dreams of sitting under willow trees in spring were coming. Your tears made sounds through the microphone. These dates so sweet. These dates so juicy. These dates that are not real. Forgeries. Forged for the sake of remaining on track. Remembering that there are those to whom counting days meant counting lives.¹⁷⁸ Counting days means counting the minutes of life.¹⁷⁹ The sweetness of the date turns in the mouth becoming paste, dissolving into a flood, where you are waiting.

[6:12am, 22/02/2021]

Something further came to me last night whilst metabolising this notion of the smuggler. From now on I will reply to the question of what I do with the answer, “I am a smuggler!” Confirming that I am a person who is on the run, that my presence in this moment is temporary, yet that I am always here, existing in the periphery. I then invite a preciousness of the moment into this conversation. Instantly calling into question another person’s ethics, their own position and relation to what they consider the law? I wish to radically call into question all those with whom I interact, and confirm that I am prepared to run, to move, that in fact I am always running and moving, always prepared to take my body elsewhere, carrying with it all these contrabanded conversations, all these bodies words.

[6:56am, 22/02/2021]

What I began to understand is that this notion of confirming oneself as a smuggler can be more than a means of refusal. It can be a bond to the fugitives in our past.¹⁸⁰ And in this work, of treating the past as our future material, we find the subjects who wrote minor history, and rescued documents in times when documents of ours were being destroyed. Making this statement of “I am a smuggler” is a means for refusing status, refusing the desire to conform to status. For being a smuggler is not something one should declare, or have documents to support, and in making this confirmation, stating my potential illegality, I articulate a desire to find a way to question the systems of regulation, where control and authority are constantly affirmed,

¹⁷⁸ Ibid. Levi.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. Darwish.

¹⁸⁰ Lisa Moses Leff, ‘Rescue or Theft? Zosa Szajkowski and the Salvaging of French Jewish History after World War II’, *Jewish Social Studies*, 18.2 (2012), 1-39.

constantly made present, in an act of critique developed out from the gesture. The smuggler is a route towards a kind of freedom.

[7:27am, 22/02/2021]

Employing the act of rescue as theft, or gesture as critique develops a concrete sense within me, that I must forgo my own right to have control, letting go, giving myself up to the secrets of our bond, the hidden activities and space that the smuggler is engaged with. In essence relying in the trust of a network of exchange, this is why, we leave the remnants of our morning coffee in a container each day, it is a gesture that remembers there are those who cannot be here.

[7:59am, 22/02/2021]

This is where practice is made, in the unannounced performative of these quiet gestures, and behaviours, which function only because of their quietness. Allowing the silence embedded in the smuggler's activities to summon the silence embedded in mourning. Passing the point of being named, of desiring comfort, and instead committing to residing in the liminal space, the space of proximity to absolute silence. This distanced Shiva is a form of this kind of space. A Matam could also be a form of this kind of space.

[8:18am, 22/02/2021]

These silences offer up the proximity to our shared histories. Histories of escape, of being on the run, of being fugitive, and the grief that follows. This process of forgoing control is a confirmation for togetherness. Of being we. We place ourselves in the hands of others, we allow our grief to have space to flow and express. Smuggling becomes a method for understanding our difficult bonds. Those whom we must never forget, that are scattered by trauma and suffering. The events that call us. Which are "what remains without remaining..."¹⁸¹ I can therefore move from place to place, between sites, where death resides *within* the excess, enacting these quiet subtle practices as behaviours, developing my method, uncovering our embedded lives that remain in architectures and documents.

[9:33am, 28/02/2021]

A few days passed, and I remembered reading Gillian Rose's words, and it came to me, that what I am calling smuggling, was once considered desertion. She writes "the mournfulness of the creaturely being, set in language and deserted by God, experiences the world as excess of signification without salvation, which is the meaning of worldly aestheticization, not truth as beauty but ornamentation without truth."¹⁸² The desertion that exists within us, the feeling of being in the desert, seeking meaning, is the chasm where lament resides. It is our inheritance. Our search for meaning is now in a state beyond

¹⁸¹ Derrida, Jacques, and Ned Lukacher, *Cinders*, Posthumanities, 28, First University of Minnesota Press edition (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014) p.25

¹⁸² Gillian Rose, *Judaism and Modernity: Philosophical Essays*, Radical Thinkers (London: Verso, 2017), p. 189.

the desert, in that we exist within the world of over-supply, where objects are considered devoid of meaning, produced, and manufactured solely for purpose. One cannot exist outside anymore. We appear from *within* space. From *within* language. To become the smuggler, to affirm my futurity as a fugitive, is to increase my proximity to ground, these materials, showing that in their movement they too collected memories, they too desire to articulate the silence and the scream.¹⁸³ Our materials lament now. I am in a state of constant lament. Moving things in the silence, working without noise, asking for help, hospitality, and communion. I am the smuggler of lament. When I tell you of my refusal, I also tell you that I am refusing to lean away, I consider refusing to be seen, and instead, protect the “urn of the spoken tongue.”¹⁸⁴ In smuggling lament I am able to situate an event where the escapee, the deserted, the smuggler and the fugitive can maintain their proximity to the ghosts that are a part of them. It is a means for approaching closeness. I am closer to you than I have ever been.

[11:13am, 28/02/2021]

Yet our collections still need homes, or if not homes, then bodies and organs. Spaces that have entries and exits. Secure repositories that can metabolise these objects without necessarily protecting them from sight.¹⁸⁵ As we move around, co-ordinating our actions, our behaviours, we tidy, we organise, we prepare, we work, we begin to articulate the process behind our compulsion to collect. But this does not answer where the collection lives, nor how it lives. So, to ask what it is to conduct a quiet subtle practice, is to ask how we take our conditioning, our awareness of the ghosts we are responsible for and the ghosts we are yet to be responsible for and find ways to tend to them.¹⁸⁶ It is to say that these collections are living organisms growing and changing in the same manner as we do.¹⁸⁷ Tending to them to continuously remain in attention to our dead. In the act of care, we do not pretend that we are not fragile, but instead offer fragile things the means to feel secure.

[1:19pm, 28/02/2021]

Aware of this nature we also collect the gestures that can secure this space. Our archive is not made up of objects and things alone. It is made up of behaviours, interactions, spaces, conversations, and of matter that refuses to be recorded. The making of coffee. The lighting of candles. Arriving with flowers. Sweeping the floor. Talking on the phone at scheduled times. Secretive phrases. The flicking of our index finger on the lips. Making tea at 3pm. Tidying the kitchen cupboard. Removing our shoes when entering the building. Small labours that can be repeated wherever we go.

¹⁸³ Ibid. Mauss p. 63.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. Derrida and Lukacher, p. 37.

¹⁸⁵ Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*. (Univ Of Chicago Press, 2017).

¹⁸⁶ Suely Rolnik, 'Archive Mania / Archivmanie', p.21.

¹⁸⁷ Clémentine Deliss, *The Metabolic Museum* (Berlin: H. Cantz Verlag, 2020).

[12:02pm, 03/03/2021]

Handwritten stains. I try to retouch them. They resist. All clothes resist change at some point. Every loose thread is an escape. Take your loose threads, put them to your ear. What do they say? I tear my garments for you before I enter the home. I have begun to stitch them together. Kariah before the Kaddish. Every piece of cloth is a body. Every shard of ash is a voice.

[8:17am, 13/03/2021]

Grief disguises itself as a mystic. For it refuses the systematic logic of enlightenment. The suitcase you used to ask us about. The suitcase that was never opened. What was inside? What will we protect now all the photographs are stored in a cloud? What do we possess now that we are forced not to possess anything?¹⁸⁸

[10:24am, 13/03/2021]

I am turning my body into a suitcase.

[11:09am, 13/03/2021]

Every time you call me to talk, you can use me to store the secrets and revelations of your day there.

[11:44am, 13/03/2021]

Should a wave of grief overwhelm you, let it, I will carry it forever.

[12:12pm, 13/03/2021]

I am a door, a window, the wind, the spade, the ear, and the rock. We must refuse this desire to dispossess ourselves. Letting these sonic and haptic materials become the possessors of our bonds.

[9:01pm, 21/03/2021]

1 uneaten apple
1 wooden paperweight
Fragments of a broken glass frame
Your favourite soup bowl
1 polishing cloth
Your glasses
The Turkish tea glass, stained
The box of matches
55 burnt matches
Rapunzel sweets
1 elastic band
1 glass for drinking coffee, also stained by your lips
1 set of keys
1 simple drinking glass

¹⁸⁸ Ibid. Bauman.

1 first edition copy of Het Process
Envelopes addressed to your friend Suzanne
7 English copies of the Trial
12 tablecloths
4 blue and white shirts
1 block of paper
1 pen
5 five-Euro notes
15 one Euro coins
1 leather wallet
1 blanket
1 suitcase
Your יָרֵךְ [chai] necklace
1 watch with a broken face, still ticking
1 ring in the shape of a house
1 toothbrush
1 pocketknife from our short pilgrimage
And 45 burnt tealights.^{189 190}

[1:44am, 29/03/2021]

We hurry our luggage into the discreet corners of this site. The edges tremble with a nuanced dance between the elegance of minimal observances and the aspiration of abundance. We want it all. We do. The smuggler that Rogoff has kindly given us knows this but refuses it. Refuses the pressure of consumption and focuses on another desire. A desire for songs that are so quiet they are almost unheard. Songs that you only hear when you are wandering in migrant ways. Songs embedded in the walls and floors of spaces we pass between. I do not carry much on my person. I carry everything in my person instead. Sweet orange, to Yehuda, where Edmond takes a desert and says there will be no more deserts.^{191 192} In your mouth coffee and chocolate become cake. And in your heart a fool is the meal we have on Sundays. Here are all the questions.

¹⁸⁹ These are the objects returned to me that I asked to be revealed for an exhibition in Rotterdam, Netherlands. I did not send them, but they were instead gently unfolded as appearances in the exhibition as it unfolded day by day. In fact, I never visited the exhibition due to the travel restrictions enforced during the Covid Pandemic's peak. The objects original appearance comes from circling every object in Franz Kafka's *The Trial*, and my dialogues with Suzanne, the host of the space. These are a kind of litany that speaks to my absence.

¹⁹⁰ "Those boxes of our domestic archive hardly spoke directly but they were silent witnesses, those piles of greetings cards and trade union cards were the epidermal cells of the lived and unspoken past, and, as storytellers, they were hardly worse than the documents that could speak for themselves. A list was all that was needed. A simple list of objects." In her detailed and elegiac book *In Memory of Memory*, Maria Stepanova consistently animates the lists of documents left behind by her Jewish ancestors. Her theory on the list is that it is more than enough to store the history of lives now disappearing in the distance of memory, as the quote above indicates it is merely the list of objects that was enough to summon the spirit of her deceased relatives, and as indicated in the list I provide, a history of an exhibition, or a person is held in the objects they have touched, and the record kept of this hapticity. Stepanova, Maria, and Sasha Dugdale, *In Memory of Memory* (Fitzcarraldo Editions, 2021) p.51.

¹⁹¹ Poetry Foundation, "Where Will I Find You by Yehudah Halevi", *Poetry Magazine*, 2020 <<https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poetrymagazine/poems/55427/where-will-i-find-you>> [accessed 13 February 2020].

¹⁹² Ibid. Jabès.

here is a cave of answers. Here is my toolkit for taking what is in my body.
Take this code. You need it now. I did not only smuggle these contrabanded
litany of materials, but I also smuggled this guide to loss.

Protocol [2]

Each day at 10am make a coffee.

Pour some of this coffee into an empty glass.

Place this glass in a subtle space within the room.

Repeat this process everyday using a new glass each time.

Do so for a self-designated period, within a minimum period of seven days.

As you do so place the glasses in a row parallel to any wall of the original subtle position.

Once you have met the date where you intended to end. Empty the glasses, and pack them in a box. Leave this box open in the final position of the last glass of the row.

On 8th May 2021 Israel entered yet another war (defence mission as they call it) on Palestinian land. Israel had been at the forefront of the vaccine roll-out and with Netanyahu's reign as leader approaching what at the time seemed like a potential end, this attack felt like a last hurrah for Netanyahu to try and solidify his position whilst being embroiled in corruption charges that would only take hold should he lose his place in government. (As of today, sadly, Benjamin Netanyahu's far-right Zionist party has claimed a return to parliament, calling into question the very authority of government in Israel and its ability to fight corruption.)

As the son of a woman who grew up in Israel, and as a Jew, I am constantly asked my opinion on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This is a constant difficulty for any Jew living away from Israel, as it asks the question whether all Jews are responsible for a nation they are able to vote in, not living in, nor committed to. It also animates the problem of attaching the ethnic and cultural qualities of being Jewish with the religious concepts and stereotypes. I am not a religious Jew. As this forthcoming chapter will illicit. As such, the exhaustion surrounding being asked about this far-away issue meant that for many years I only engaged with this conflict within my family and our friends in Israel.

To be Jewish does not mean you are Israeli, although you have the right to be, and even if you are Israeli this does not mean you agree with the actions of the government. Furthermore, to be Jewish and to resist Israel is an extremely difficult place to situate yourself, for more often than not, as a Jewish person you have some family in Israel who remain committed to their country, beyond their support of their government. To attempt to articulate what resistance looks like from this position is part of the work of refusal I want to think through in this thesis, it was a challenge I committed to. And in refusing the policies of a nation that you have any form of entanglement to, be it political, social, or familial, or all three, should be conceived as a form of minor protest, one that is not about suggesting you are going to make the whole system collapse, but rather, that protest itself is an affair of

*committed, long term, refusal, and an act of care for those who are
harmed by said government.*

*This forthcoming chapter finds itself in this thesis to answer the
responsibility placed upon me as a Jewish writer and artist who has ties
to Israel. To speak on the conflict. Although I still ask myself why
that is, and why as Jews somewhat removed from the internal politics,
why it is called upon us to speak on this subject. Stylistically you will
note a clear shift in this text. My mother and father appear in detail.*

*The act of protest felt like an act of making personal what seems to
many merely political. This approach was to acknowledge the smallness
of the ground where the real war is hurting the spirit of individuals.*

Just as Bad as the Last

[6:52am, 08/05/2021]

I write today, for the first time, to an unintimate audience, to a body I do not know. Or at least to a body I feel severed from. I write to them to say I love them. I write to say that my writing, no matter how I wish it to, will not protect them. That even though, at the age of thirteen, when I first spoke, when I told others to be wary of the violence that sits in the belly of the sons of a father that is not a father, I knew then the daily occurrences would continue. I am sorry words are not hammers. I also write to people I am told are supposed to be my siblings. Are we not all siblings in this border? Who taught us to hate? Today I read of events. The date is the only event I know.

[11:13am, 09/05/2021]

Let me return to 2003. To a small science lab in suburban London. It is my first time giving an argument in debate. My first debating session ever. We are told to bring a subject that is personal to us. I chose the *Storming of the dome of the rock, 2000*.¹⁹³ I had visited my grandparents in Israel that year. My attachment to Israel is to family, not ideology. I haven't been back since my grandparents passed. My mother left in 86'. I was raised questioning the politics, the provincialism. We would visit family friends. Car rides would be hour long swear journeys about how Bibi is the enemy, "a piece of shit! A corrupt shit!" Before Bibi was Sharon. I remember him daily, that moment in 2000, when, surrounded by riot police, he decided to storm the rock. I remember thinking why? I also remember having to exit a restaurant because of a bus bomb a year or so earlier, stories of car jackings, and the wars that happened because some kids decided to "wander off". What I had never heard until I was older, were stories of the IDF going into young Israeli's homes. A friend of a friend told me they had had their hard drives stolen in the middle of the night while they were sleeping. In Israel you hear of resistance in quiet spaces. Where friends convene. I was raised in this resistance. The resistance that happens in private spaces. That understands the violence surrounding every voice in this fight.

[2:23pm, 10/05/2021]

Here we are again. Bound. Attending. The stones. The chairs. All the dust. What materials matter when the conflict remains? To speak in this conflict, one must know where they begin, or where to begin from. To understand that this sequence of events is old. That to have a position is not an act of arrival. For there are no arrivals. There is just being there, constantly. The voiceless are there, constantly. My position is founded in a history of my parents' refusal. My mother refusing her Israeli identity, alongside my father's resistance of the

¹⁹³ 'Rioting as Sharon Visits Islam Holy Site', *The Guardian*, 2000
<<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2000/sep/29/israel>> [accessed 19 June 2021].

Israeli political regime, that lead to their exit from Israel in the 1980s. When we resist, we say, we are dutiful. We say, “we remember”. It is our wounds that remain our tools for preparing the future.

The broken broom still sweeps the dust. Preparing the ruinous square, so we can share silence. Here in my room, I sweep. I prepare. I sit. I listen. I attend. I walk around. I do not speak like I did in 2003. No-one wants to listen. The nuance of our siblinghood is broken by a desire that is unseen. But this is not our unseen. This is an unseen I cannot fathom. For it breaks, not bonds. It speaks over the voiceless. A science of pain. An unseen that wishes to convince you, my unintimate audience, that we are not made up of honey and apples and olives and watermelon and dates and coffee. And that our dream for the silence to read and days of sitting in the street enjoying coffee with friends the way you do, are valid forms of labour.

[8:00am, 11/05/2021]

The broom is our companion.

[8:06am, 12/05/2021]

I deal with dailyness. Only dailyness. Because it is too much labour to speak like this. Because I know how it is for those on the ground. But also, because it is too much self-explaining, to you, to have to make you understand, how I wish to say I love and want to protect my 3 and 5-year-old cousins who are in bomb shelters, and also, how I want to protect my friend Sohaila’s cousins in Gaza who don’t have a shelter to shelter in and who can’t even get word to her. We are trying to hold spaces. We are trying to say that each person who is conflicted can be here with us. Daily. Just trying to make their coffee and say their mourning prayer without the sounds of violence overhead. We speak to open a bit of space for silence by way of messages. To halt the news. The headlines. The political agendas. The spectacle. To halt the means that sever our ability to tend to the work that needs tending to. That severs our nuance.¹⁹⁴

[2:31am, 13/05/2021]

Every time glass breaks, I am constitutionally broken again.

Every time glass breaks, I hear the echo of a dispossessed body.

Every time glass breaks, I ask who has the right to exist?

The speed of the glass’s destruction cannot prevent the force of its return.

[3:03am, 15/05/2021]

The broom is a prisoner.

¹⁹⁴ Abd el-Fattah and Klein, p. 117.

[2:44am, 16/05/2021]

I return to private spaces. I can always be found there.

[1:33pm, 17/05/2021]

Throughout my youth I was told a story by my father and his friend Amit about a play they staged (they both worked in theatre – my father as a set designer, Amit the director) called *The Island*, by Athol Fugard which is about the South African apartheid.¹⁹⁵ They decided to stage this play in Israel, on a small experimental stage with two Arab actors. The political consequences of this choice were not lost on them. This was 1980s Israel. These were Arab Israelis, who were unquestionably underrepresented within the field. The play was staged in a simple manner. A small, elevated square. A broom. These were their tools. As the days unfolded there were protests. My father and his friends were stoned. Attacked. They knew this would happen. They continued. They knew this play was important. They knew it was essential to speak about apartheid in Israel the way it was spoken of in South Africa. We still see this discussion today, but this was the 1980s. This story was implanted in me. I carry it on me like a tattoo. You must understand, this fight we are fighting, it is more than exhausting, it is ageless. If you feel tired, ask for help, but do not wane. Know your intentions are of validity. Know when we speak, be it a whisper, be it a scream, be it a memory, there is something there that carries. I carry it for you. I am a carrier. In my basement studio, where I burn coffee beans, I also repeat the process of preparing letters to send, dispersing information, dispersing this very information I am giving you now. The space that seems quiet, the unseen I know, is where our resistance grows.

[5:21pm, 21st May] (*ceasefire*)

A claim is not a claim when there are deaths in between the claim.

[4:02am, 23/05/2021]

At Passover we say, “next year in Jerusalem,” but in my family we all laugh. We do not wish to celebrate next year in Jerusalem. To concur with Mahmoud Darwish, “[we] don’t love Jerusalem.”¹⁹⁶ This is the irony of the modern Jewish family. We practice something akin to tradition, but it is performed as a familial ritual, and sparingly. It presents itself as the performative synthesis of our understanding of our roots to our Jewish religious culture, but it does not define our Jewish ethnic culture. Nor does Israel have much to do with this definition. Yet, something strange happens when the conflicts reappear in Israel. It’s as though all of sudden we are thrown into a pool of Jewish bodies and cast in a one size fits all situation. Anti-Semitism suddenly feels more

¹⁹⁵ Athol Fugard, *The Township Plays: No-Good Friday; Nongogo; The Coat; Sizwe Bansi Is Dead; The Island*, ed. by Dennis Walder, 1993.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. Darwish, p. 41.

intense. The resistance, the refusals we made earlier seem empty. Fear takes hold, for many, the natural response is to step away. To hide. Hiding from ties to a place that holds no real connection to your personal definition of your identity or personhood and hiding from getting hurt for being Jewish. If you fight you receive conflict on all sides. Jews ask you “why don’t you support Israel?” – If you don’t fight others ask, “how can you, as a Jew, not fight for injustice?”

How can you speak for both? How can you say, I love my Israeli cousins but dislike Netanyahu’s policies, when all a person wants to think is that all of Israel is represented by this far-right leader? How can you say to your cousin that you want to be pro-Palestine, when they say to you “But if we do not fight the Arabs, they will erase us?” How can you fight all sides at once, and still stand on your feet? How can you express pride to be Jewish and remain in this space of refusal and resistance? I have no ready-made answer for this question.

[12:05pm, 27/05/2021]

My friend in Chile messages me, they are burning the Israeli flag at the embassy. She asks me if I am safe in writing this to you. I tell the story of my father and the play, and the protests. I tell her we have no choice. We know the consequences; if I must write this then I must accept the risk to my safety.

[4:17am, 30/05/2021]

The broom is a warrior.

[4:29pm, 01/06/2021]

I buy an olive tree in London and buy olive oil that plants trees in Ramallah. I gift a tree to a friend. Sohaila is writing an essay on the trees in Palestine.¹⁹⁷ I continue my proposal to protect the trees in Spain. Across the world the Olive tree is in trouble, it too is becoming an exile. It too wants fertile ground.^{198 199}

200 201

¹⁹⁷ During the peak of this war, I posted many stories on Instagram on my position regarding it. As a Jewish person in the UK, I felt it was urgent that those of us who have relation to Israel are able to also insist on the constant critique of its political regime, and to also insist that being Jewish does not mean you must accept a state’s behaviour nor that a state’s behaviour reflects you. Through these posts, my friend Sohaila and I had long emotional conversations about our cousins who live on opposing sides of the wall that encloses Gaza. We both committed to writing texts, regarding the real and metaphorical violences enacted by the Israeli state, that seek to prevent our sibling hood.

¹⁹⁸ ‘West Bank Palestinians’ Olive Trees Burn as U.N. Urges Protection for Harvest’, *Reuters*, 29 October 2020, section World News <<https://www.reuters.com/article/us-israel-palestinians-olives-idUSKBN27E1Y6>> [accessed 24 May 2022].

¹⁹⁹ ‘Olive Oil Industry under Increasing Threat from “Olive Leprosy”’, *The Guardian*, 2020 <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/apr/13/olive-oil-industry-under-increasing-threat-from-olive-leprosy>> [accessed 10 August 2021].

²⁰⁰ ‘Spain’s Ancient Olive Trees under Threat from Market for Garden Ornaments’, *The Guardian*, 2015 <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2015/dec/31/spain-ancient-olive-trees-threat-garden-ornaments>> [accessed 10 August 2021].

²⁰¹ ‘Italy’s Farmers Turn to Cow Dung to Save Beloved Olive Trees’, *The Guardian*, 2018 <<http://www.theguardian.com/world/2018/jul/22/italy-farmers-olive-trees-xylella-blight-cow-dung-puglia>> [accessed 10 August 2021].

[7:22am, 03/06/2021]

The fall of Bibi begins.²⁰²

[1:48am, 07/06/2021]

I slip in. Sleep is harder. I text my mum. I ask her to remind me why she left. She says she couldn't take it anymore. She says she didn't want that for us. She says she argued with my youngest cousin the other night, he believes in something we don't. You feel alone with this intensity. Not everyone wants to deal with it. Not everyone wants to care for it. You feel alone because you want to protect so many bodies.

I slip too much. Feel too vulnerable. Lose control over my sensitivity, become noisier, when I wish to be more silent. Pushed into noise the noise pushes. I hold my breath. I wake up earlier and earlier. Take colder showers. Wait for the sun. Listen to the birds. I don't text anyone. I take myself away from social situations. Avoid noise. Wait for my apples to ferment and turn to cider. Unpack the remaining candles from a box I was sent months before by a friend. There is still some wax to burn, so I light them, and watch as they empty out. These slow processes become a way I to slow myself, but also as a reminder that as time passes our struggles strengthen.

[9:03am, 10/06/2021]

If I am to keep holding this space for you, then I must ensure the space is always prepared, keeping it tidy, ensuring the residues of dust can be amassed into the excess of our protests, and should a stranger arrive, they too know what these excesses can do.

[4:52pm, 14/06/2021] (*ceasefire ends*)

We waited for change, but this may not be change. It may be worse than change. It may reveal a worser cognition, some force that drives everything in multiple directions faster, with more force. For this new face only has a short time to achieve their aims before another face comes to articulate another idea. Grief will be heightened when there is less time between blasts. Our calls are unheard. The ground shakes. The roads are littered with stones and rocks. The air a shockwave covered in grey. Months pass in minutes. Dust swirls into the sea. Bodies are covered in tablecloths. Food is shared in sparing fragments. A new leader brings new chants. The broom awaits our hands. This may be just as bad as the last.

²⁰² Patrick Kingsley and Richard Pérez-Peña, 'Netanyahu Ousted as Israeli Parliament Votes in New Government', *The New York Times*, 14 June 2021, section World <<https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/13/world/middleeast/netanyahu-naftali-bennett-israel-vote.html>> [accessed 24 May 2022].

[3:31pm, 16/06/2021]

Today, like every day, I sweep the dust in my room. This is not a closed gesture. The sweep is now a protest. The dust is now our material force. I collect it in an empty jar, prepare it for transport, knowing there is nowhere it can be sent where it will not speak. Knowing that silence is a noise. Knowing that in my conflict to protect, I find little shards of glass in every sweeping. The broom has become a hammer.

Momentum is a time thief. I had been writing for months without much of a pause, all the while we were moving in and out of lockdowns.

People's anger was intense. It was widely felt that the government was prepared to risk the lives of people for the benefits of their economy. The date, which had initially said, "I too am still alive", now became something other. The longer I worked with the date, the more I realised it had become another material, another memento, and that it too operated as an essential tool for a thief. The date became my first storage device, albeit ephemeral, a system for an archive. It was becoming clearer that writing was serving purposes for me beyond the page. It was beginning to be an archive. The more I worked, the more I kept envisioning materials, and spaces. This literature felt as though it was in fact the memory or record of some unknown series of plays. A [g]host of monologues and confessions, and that my exhibition practice, which, out of the momentum of my writing's excess was starting to demand more attention was to be found in understanding what or who this unknown was.

I was lucky too. I had been invited to two residencies in close succession, one in Spoleto, Italy the other in Manchester, UK. In the months that follow I moved between these two sites developing projects in which the lament takes centre stage. It is at this moment, emerging from the interior of the home, that my practice began to take centre fold in my thinking. The archive of writing was developing a relationship to acknowledging that history speaks back, and that histories and their traces had become a material in my practice. In became urgent to document this process.

What follows are the recordings of this progression in and out of writing. Of building a relationship to the archive as an unfolding space that was being in produced in real time. Of meditations of hospitality as exhibition practice, and of the poetics and detritus that is made in writing, be it proposals for impossible projects, or exhibiting works that appear and disappear, all of which amounts to the production of an exhibition practice that pursues the methodology of lamentology.



(fig.9. The Offenbach Archival Depot, 1946. Courtesy National Archives and Records Administration, Washington, DC. In the developing research around notions of the archive I became fixated on this image of the Offenbach Depot, the site where stolen and looted books were held awaiting either destruction or relocation to a site where the so called “Jewish Problem” would be studied to further Jewish extermination by the Nazis.)

An email to the curator of PINK, Manchester, UK

[10:21am, 07/08/2021]

Dear...

As we spoke upon my first visit to the site in August 2021, central to both our desires when preparing the space of a site for exhibition are gestures of hosting.²⁰³ I had mentioned the idea of bringing your work in setting up the coffee shop within the building into a material element and process of the work I would prepare and make, finding a way for this to become a performative and constant element within any exhibition we might produce, whilst also considering how my time at PINK can always be referred to. As the materiality of coffee is already present in my work, it felt right to find ways to continue to care for this material and its excesses as we worked through the site, thinking about the ways that coffee is consumed and how that can become a method for considering how people engage with our work.

As is common practice in my studio I enjoy inviting guests for coffee, and often consider the studio as a space for hosting and conversing, treating this as the work itself. I feel this is something I am rigorously attempting to question as a whole; that the act of being social, of being in conversation, is something I want to touch and feel constantly, not as labour but as a mode of being. When I explained this idea of coffee and sociality to my grandmother she understood it immediately as a method rooted in our past. It is the pulse of my work. In thinking about this and thinking about your own desire to transform the exhibition space into a hosting space, I wondered how we could transport this mode of being into the building, turning the daily, and small, into a systemic process that unfolds live within our research and project.

I had the sense that we could achieve this in a simple manner, by offering coffee as time. What I propose is that for every day the project space is open we offer coffee to any guest. This coffee should be served in a specific mug, which I will source, that is identical to the mugs I drink from in my studio. These mugs can be bought from a small shop called *Leone Legal Consultancy* on Camberwell Church Street, which is five minutes' walk from my studio.

Of course, I realise the name of this shop is also oddly close to my own name and that this is a strange coincidence. In buying these mugs from this shop we will also be aiding this family business's son's school, for which I will have them write a document which will be part of the documents in the space.

²⁰³ International Conference 'Hospitality - Hosting Relations in Exhibitions', and Nanne Buurman, *Hospitality: Hosting Relations in Exhibitions*, ed. by Beatrice von Bismarck and Benjamin Meyer-Krahmer, Cultures of the Curatorial (presented at the International Conference 'Hospitality - Hosting Relations in Exhibitions', Berlin Leipzig: Sternberg Press; Cultures of the Curatorial, 2016)

Upon exiting the exhibition, each guest will be asked to leave the mug in the space. I will then allow the mugs to remain, with the traces of coffee, lip stains and all, for the duration of the show. My feeling is that the work will look and feel like a used coffee shop come the end of the exhibition, but that during its presentation this will also re-iterate what we spoke of, that the act of hosting, of being the host, is performative, and live, and that these small, daily, ritual labours of gesture begin to accumulate, making space for the traces of bodies to begin to resonate, and words and conversations that existed to become residual tremors that are felt only after.

Your friend.

J. x

Dear Sir & Madam,

Malaki Conteh last week sold some of his cups to a local artist for £160. Moreover, even though he is selling 3 bread or cakes for £1 Malaki has already raised over £384 in 3 weeks. Malaki is asking permission to purchase the attached Leomark Football Table for The Prebendal School and the attached Strikeworth Multi Games table for the Boarding House.

Please email me if you give your permission for us to order the attached two items which would be delivered direct to The Prebendal School. We would never order any items without the Headmaster and the Head of the Choristers permission.

Thank-you,

Abdul Conteh

Leone Legal Consultancy
73 Camberwell Church Street
Camberwell Green, SE5 8TR
TEL: 020 7703 1333
Regulated by O.I.S.C

(fig.10. Joshua Leon, Letter from Abdul Conteh as proof of purchase and movement of funds, 2022)

Stranger things have happened [a proposal]

Upon entry in the space gesture each guest to the table.

At this table, coffee should be served to any guest who desires it.

This coffee should be served in a white porcelain coffee mug that is atop the table.

The guest should be allowed to drink it as they roam the space.

Upon leaving the space the guest should be asked to leave the mug behind.

At the end of each day the cups will not be cleaned but placed in the space with the remnants of the coffee as remainders of the guest's presence over each day of the exhibition.

[9:33am, 19/09/2021]

Words have become a burden.

[A Proposal for an exhibition as a single work. part 2]

[4:16pm, 22/09/2021]

I propose to produce a cotton dyed in coffee made from the daily sludge produced by 86 Princess St, from my time in residence at PINK, Manchester.

Howard at Pincroft Cotton Dye Specialists, Chorley, informs me there is potentially 100 metres of fabric that we can use to dye in coffee. It begins to weigh on me that this word dye is so close to the actual word die, and therefore death and that there must be some reason I have chosen to work in this manner. Yes, I appreciate I wanted to manage the relation of the space and to play with the dynamics of the site. But I had also forgotten, if only briefly, that language is the site of this play. I also keep thinking how I will insert rest into our work, so that we can stop and contemplate the resonances of a site that was once a cotton mill itself that now possesses bodies labouring in such a multitude of ways that its function is nearly uncatchable.

I take a breath. Listen to Howard's voice on the phone. He promises a return email soon. I tell him there is no rush. That I work in slow time. He acknowledges this phrase, or passes through it, but I know he is not sure what it means. I will explain it to him soon.

The dye will be made from the waste of the daily grounds of the patrons of the café at 86 Princess Street, Manchester. Using this process of recycling to approach the material memory of the building. Becoming their witness, if only for the short period of a few months. But also, how the coffee ties back to my exhibition at Daily Practice, Rotterdam, and the attendant glass that Suzanne poured each day, which in turn ties back to Darwish and *Memory for Forgetfulness* and those passages on coffee which I can never forget, because of the stories my mother told me of Israel and her exile, but also because it was Ricardo, who I shared so many conversations and coffees within Berlin, who had told me to read the book.²⁰⁴

I exist in a disjointed series of enfolded connections to the world.

But also, I wanted to explain to Howard, how working with cotton had come from the building's original historical function, as it was a cotton mill during Manchester's industrial era up until mid-20th century, and ties to the history of the city, and the history of émigré in Manchester, who came and made their name in garment production.

I am not the witness. The material is a witness waiting to be heard.

²⁰⁴ Ibid. Darwish.

Yet Howard is busy. K.M., the curator is busy. Time is a poor material.

The Smuggler's Way

[11:06am, 30/09/2021] Proust in real time

The Smuggler's Way – is a reconsideration of the novel form in Proust's *Swann's Way*. It is a discordant unfolding & live telling of events in the contemporary, according to a diasporic existence. A broken novel, one that is, and has been taking place in multiple locations, simultaneously, exhibitions, encounters, sites in other countries, as physical manifestations that can be seen at specific times, but are more often than not, missed.²⁰⁵

[9:08am, 01/10/2021] Arrival

We skip through borders although they are troubled. carrying with us news. Carrying with us names. With only our handbooks, which record in dialects. In it I drew up plans for a folding safe deposit box to store these secrets.²⁰⁶ Hiding all my possessions. At each border rests an attendant, maintaining the route, for the ones who can pass and the ones who pass unseen. you are close behind us. Enfolded, migrated, packed, picked, un, n' undone, two at a time, two times in time, we know "*the law is endowed with its own discrete, integral history, its own "science", so to speak, so they claim, so they produce, so we produce, aroused by a desire to do no wrong, but do so either way, in the ins and outs of the spaces they cannot see.*"²⁰⁷ Shtum, but hum, like a residual shake, that makes all those precious objects know they are precious. A name is precious too. Our names speak for you when you disappear. In Toledo D. sees our names on stones. Yet we have not been around in centuries. In Geneva we find our names in grey vaults. Quietly maintained by daily sweeps. I sweep. We insurg. The smuggled document slips between discrete tongues.²⁰⁸ Like our keepers we too learnt the art of discretion through noise. Sparrow plays on speakers we installed. The eyes drift to the ceiling. But we must return to our work.

To that which can be packed and unpacked at a moment's notice.

²⁰⁵ Marcel Proust and Lydia Davis, *In Search of Lost Time. 1, The Way by Swann's* (Penguin, 2003).

²⁰⁶ Jodi Berlin Ganz, 'Heirs Without Assets and Assets Without Heirs: Recovering and Reclaiming Dormant Swiss Bank Accounts', 70.

²⁰⁷ Judith N. Shklar, *Legalism: Law, Morals, and Political Trials* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 1986), p. 2.

²⁰⁸ Lisa Moses Leff, *The Archive Thief: The Man Who Salvaged French Jewish History in the Wake of the Holocaust*, Reprint edition (New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 166.

[7:26pm, 02/10/2021] Socialising [4]

[meal no.3 Lamb Goulash]

[Lamb shank

Sweet onions

Garlic

Carrots

Tomato paste

Cherry tomatoes

Chopped tomatoes

Paprika

Salt

Pepper

Oregano

Basil

Olive oil]

[8:21am, 05/10/2021] A litany of things in my grandmother's handwriting
*[found on documents written in 2001 sent to the Austrian Secretary General
of the National Fund and the General Settlement Fund for Restitution]*

A gold watch. A chain. Necklaces. 2 rings. Silver Candlesticks. Silver Dishes.
Curtains. Some Paintings. Books. Some furniture.

Tahara, Preparing the Body for Burial

Before the body is buried, it is washed in a ritual act of purification called Tahara. Just as a baby is washed and enters the world clean and pure, so do we leave the world cleansed by the religious act of Tahara.

After the body is cleansed, it is dressed in shrouds (in Hebrew, tachrichim). The shrouds are simple and plain and made of white cotton or linen.

[5:29pm, 08/10/2021]

long inhale

[10:59am 08/10/2021] **Shibboleth**

Every dissemination that refuses to hold secrets conditions itself towards a total rejection of the hidden, and therefore a disavowal of the right to privacy. We remain private.

[11:37am, 08/10/2021]

In this unfolding, the undocumented should remain undocumented. By refusing to produce documentation of events, performances, and acts unfolding, this discordant form expresses itself and one becomes involved and in relation to those who exist without documentation, outside the edges of the frame, disavowing the static image, and the hierarchy of optics, and situating ourselves within the blind spots, the tremors of a history and place.²⁰⁹

Here, in this grey space, materials, poetic devices of language, proposals and instructions, ephemera, and the build-up of these forms become our document. We condition ourselves by constantly asking; "who is the document for?" Striving to consider the meaning of a document, and those who hold documents and the service of documents. All the while asking the other to witness the process of producing these undocumented processes, becoming our own witnesses, and hosting in a way that everyone can become a

²⁰⁹ Ibid. Stoler.

witness. The witness is our guest. But who witnesses the witness if they have no witness?²¹⁰

[11:46am, 10/10/2021] Spinning Spinoza

Ethics is an elastic language.²¹¹

[11:51am, 10/10/2021] Do the work

Intimacy is being used as a production, as a site of labour, when this happens it is subsumed into the rubric of performative work without ritual, and away from the site of care and meaning, in order to repossess intimacy, one must not speak of it. It is a mode of being, not a speech act, or an act of pointing at.²¹²

[12:00pm, 10/10/2021] Yes, I am here

Memory is produced in real time. Memory is a live event, it is being produced, experienced, or witnessed. Who witnesses the witness when the witness forgets to witness?²¹³ How do we remind the witness they are witnessing?²¹⁴

[1:17pm, 14/10/2021] Shake

The smuggler is a tremor. They tend to that which was left out, that which is not spoken about, calling into question the production of the archive, as if there could be an archive, as if the archive serves anyone. We, as smugglers, ask, who tends to the archive, who cares for these things? We insist that the carer, the custodian, are the archive. We say those who listen are the archive. We ask what can we insert that is not here, that was not allowed in? What this invites, is the idea of the smuggler, not as the criminal, but as a member of a community of people who are often pushed to the edges. The smuggler is an empowered vision for the displaced, an attempt at reclaiming the economics of sovereignty away from power structures. As smugglers we circle the centre. The smuggler is in a transport vehicle darting across the fields that we were unwilling to hear at first. In this manner of speaking the smuggler is not moving contraband but is restituting that which was deemed contraband. The smuggler's premier question is: who has the right to steal? Followed by: what has been wrongfully stolen that needs to be returned?

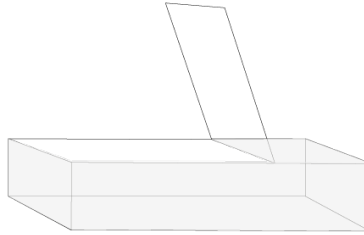
²¹⁰ Jacques Derrida, Thomas Dutoit, and Outi Pasanen, *Sovereignities in Question: The Poetics of Paul Celan* (Fordham University Press, 2005)

²¹¹ Benedict Spinoza and Stuart Hampshire, *Ethics*, trans. by Edwin Curley, Illustrated edition (London: Penguin Classics, 1996).

²¹² Ibid. Han.

²¹³ Ibid. Derrida, Dutoit, and Outi Pasanen.

²¹⁴ "The present is what passes, the present is what comes to pass [se passe], it lingers in this transitory passage (*Weile*), in the coming-and-going, *between* what goes and comes, in the middle of what leaves and what arrives, at the articulation between what absents itself and what presents itself." Derrida, Jacques, Peggy Kamuf, and Jacques Derrida, *Specters of Marx: The State of the Debt, the Work of Mourning and the New International*, Routledge Classics, Repr (London: Routledge, 2011) p.29



(fig.11. Joshua Leon, Model of safe deposit box made of glass to be installed as keeper of the archive. This drawing is a proposal to build my own archive made of glass. Or as I called a transparent archive, in which documents from my life, my family's life and my research would be held. This proposal also includes the desire to archive my as yet unrealised projects)

[9:24pm, 14/10/2021] Socialising [5]

[meal no.4 Chicken Soup – updated]

[Chicken thighs

Sweet Onions

Garlic

Carrots

Celery

Parsley

Dill

Salt

Pepper

Olive oil]

[2:14pm, 15/10/2021]

A conversation with Giulia and Guy at Gattapone Hotel about the olives took place.

We spoke about what will happen to the olives and what is happening to olives across the continent.

The soil is wounded. The harvest will be poor.

[2:19pm, 15/10/2021]

The olives turn from green to black.

Research is an act of listening.

[7:34am, 16/10/2021]

Dear D.M.

I have been struggling to find a way into the space. Now that I am at rest in one place, I find that its unfamiliarity offers little to me. Perhaps the burden of its history is too much? Perhaps the fact that nothing is demanded of me becomes a problem? What space is being made for the lost? Spoleto is a museum, a mausoleum without bodies. So, who am I? What is my role? How do I approach a space that asks nothing of me, that does not even acknowledge my existence?

I write this phrase; *Stains and Propositions* in my notebook and set about making models of everything. It seems appropriate. I adjust to feeling temporary.

You once asked me why I work with residues. I had prepared a response as if it were necessary to explain it all. As if detritus can be explained. Yet this museum, which encompasses a whole town, fails to be explained. I pick up boxes from the street. I do not know why. I make my own paper boxes. I want to soak them in coffee. But they will become waste. It rains through the night. I think about Ricardo's "Lavagem do pai".²¹⁶ Washing of the Father. I think about the act of *Tabara*. I want to wash the town in coffee. A stain. I want to shroud its interiors. A proposition. Before enfolding it in these boxes and shipping them elsewhere. Paper caskets in migration. During the nights I wonder, did Sol have a Shiva?²¹⁷

[11:28am, 17/10/2021] **A context for where the exhibition is really happening**

The hospitality industry is at the forefront of the cultural dissemination of the habits that enact the codes of the right to be social and the potential for hosting within our current cultural language. It is littered with an iconography

²¹⁶ Ricardo Domeneck, *Lavagem Do Pai*, 2015.

²¹⁷ The Sol of this sentence is Sol Lewitt whose studio I was living in.

of signs, symbols, and rituals that indicate who is welcome and who will not be welcomed. Their means of organising space, of selecting glassware, or crockery, tablecloths, etc, are not arbitrary choices, but rather exhibitions of a system and its own values, it is as much the site of exhibition making as the gallery.

[4:13am, 18/10/2021]

This question of hosting and hospitality haunts me, for it enters a new relation on closeness as a necessity within the periphery.²¹⁸

[5:00pm, 19/10/2021]

Everything must be impermanent here.

[9:44am, 22/10/2021]

Is there such a thing as a good thief?

[10:14am, 25/10/2021] Past is passed

Coffee has become my residue.

[8:11am, 28/10/2021]

Morning coffee and its lingering aroma are documents.

The conversation is an event; its memory is its documents.

A walk is a document, so too the footprints you make.

Olive seeds resonate, they tremor and speak of troubled trees, they too are documents.

We are restaging the document as undocumentable, a dramaturgy of the absent.

²¹⁸ Derrida, Jacques, and Anne Dufourmantelle, *Of Hospitality*, Cultural Memory in the Present (Stanford, Calif: Stanford University Press, 2000)



(fig. 12. Joshua Leon, Dramaturgy of the Absent, poster, Spoleto, Italy, 2021. Poster displayed in Spoleto, Italy, translating the text of 28/10/2021 into Italian and presented along the route of a walk I did, and invited people in the city to join me on, everyday.)

[10:41am, 27/02/2022] Things Left Out

What is the archive of the gesture and where do we archive our gestures? How do we access the history of a place to find a way to think about the forms of gestures we need to prepare a space, or place, and to be prepared to receive a guest? Who is the guest of this space?

To work in this manner means trying to work in between the gap of the domestic and the social, of readying spaces for counsel, where private work and public work intersect, if only for a moment.

In engaging with kinds of immaterial forms, the performative, the communicative, the left out or wasted, we invest time in speaking and listening to the things that we interact with daily. Producing a vernacular of routine, of habit and of movement. As we move. As these [im]materials move, as we make them move, we begin to consider the systems that aid our relations, that allow us to connect and that make us depend on one other. This process of passing these things between us asks us to consider what is passed without officialdom or as contraband, without being registered, and what demands new forms of registration, for there are materials that are not marked, that refuse documentation and that reserve this right. Our duty is to respect this right.

[5:39pm, 17/11/2021] Withdrawal [*violent abrupt stop*]

I return to the site of PINK, Manchester. Journeying between two places, neither of which are really known to me. Both offered me ‘material’ budgets. But what is a material when you work without so called ‘hard’ materials. I reminded myself “*The lament is an immaterial thing.*” I remind myself that I am a labourer of the exchange. and begin to question what it means to work in the field of materials that cannot be seen. How can I produce the economics of the exchange?

Yesterday I was listening to Eva Barto’s presentation at Bâtard festival. In this recording she elicits a contract she has begun to produce with sponsors of her work, that functions over time, the price of which is based on her rent. At the end of the timeline a work may be delivered, yet what this work is ambiguous. Barto has managed to remove the notion of productivity away from the notion of result into the immaterial values of finance and time. There is more to this, for within the articulation of removing oneself from the act of production for the sake of production, which is also the act of being seen for the sake of being seen, Barto withdraws from a productive performance and the performance of productivity. She elects when she will produce, and when her work will enact its own public moment. This withdrawal is a formulation of materiality. It is a violent abrupt stop that is emancipatory, in that it stops us performing for the sake of it. Asking who do we produce for? Why do we burn our personal energy? Who do we expend our energy for? These are the questions Barto’s contract creates the terms for and gives room for us to explore without being extracted from or by ourselves. She formulates the means for us to take our time, to treat our time as labour, and to withdraw rather than appear, as work.²²⁰

Sitting in the building, I took stock of the work before me. The coffee grains becoming dye, cooking for six to eight hours a day before straining, which is only half the process. The wood, that I had been calling tables that was only wood that was being gently soaked in coffee. The consultations with carpenters and woodworkers. The chasing of the dye expert who is more elusive than a jewel thief. The daily writing and note taking. The conversations with the café staff and patrons. The observing of the building and its functioning. The gentle slow amassing of time. This is my labour. This is my materiality.

And then, I stopped. For I also realised there was no more finance to support our labour. We had reached a point in this particular moment where a limit had been reached. And out of respect to myself. My body. To those who I was working with. Those who I had asked for help. We had to stop. A violent

²²⁰ ‘Caveat Publishing & Performing Relationships. Caveat at Bâtard Festival □ Eva Barto, “On Buttonwood Press and Other Deals” Eva Barto’s Presentation at Bâtard Festival’ <<https://caveat.be/notes/eva-bartos-presentation-at-btard-festival.html#1959832768971892>> [accessed 22 November 2021].

abrupt stop had to come. The detritus, that I hold so dear, had become heavy. It became time to attend to it as though it were a tender body. I needed rest. We needed rest. One's labour is material too. And the work we do in the unseen amounts to a mass that cannot be refused.

[7:52pm, 17/03/2022] Socialising [6]

[meal no.5 Burgers]

[Minced beef

Salt

Pepper

Onions

Sugar

Eggs

Hamburger buns

Pickles

Mustard

Ketchup

Potatoes

Vegetable oil]

Inconclusive

[11:27pm, 07/01/2023]

How do you write a conclusion for something that you stated as being continuous? How do you resist being singular or producing singular moments when interacting with systems that appear to want to produce singularities?

The lament I set out for you is the lament that cannot be contained, for it is unfolding before me, I am not in control of its future, in the same manner as I am not in control of how my grief wishes to express itself. I plot a daily path. Encountering the trajectory of a novel that I know but cannot see. What Berlant would call ‘atmospheres.’²²¹ In this sense the lament that exists in these pages, the lament that exists in these poetic and notational fragments, proposals, protocols, and exhibition ideas that may or may not take place, are the inconclusive reckoning of a body of relationships managing diasporic entanglements. To refuse to be singular is to say, “we refuse the very notion that our existence is without these entanglements”, and to understand this, is to understand that we will produce new entanglements along the way. As we move, we produce. And as we produce, we host and are hosted. And so, we become knotted further in our relationships, deepened, rooted, and lost. This loss is essential. It is not the lostness that is cast as a loss of purpose, but a loss of control that allows for trust. A trust in the power of conversation, in the power of the bond. In the world of the stranger, this loss is the very thing that brings you and I into relation to the unseen, perhaps even the *we*, remaining in constant closeness to the periphery, a place our diasporic existence has been conditioned to understand as part of us, even if it is not who we are now. This trust is the condition of love that conditions the lament. Love is the condition of the work of lament. Love is the continuous flow that perforates the motion of our relations, for it is a porous affect that refuses all boundaries and is constantly uncertain about its end game. Love is a thief that does not recognise it is a thief. We steal back that which was stolen, rescuing our lost by way of this theft, we do it for love, rescuing our objects, voices, and materials from those who stole from us, so that they could own us.²²²

And so, what do we offer to uphold these principles? These pages transcribed a commentary on the events that took place and that are set to take place, a midrash on a midrash awaiting another midrash. But what is a commentary if not a letter to a lover? In this sense, you and I have been entangled in an expansion of epistolary and diaristic forms. For these forms are forms of grief.

²²¹ Ibid. Berlant, p. 66.

²²² Ibid. Leff, ‘Rescue or Theft?’

The exhibition has become epistolary and diaristic in that it will now communicate with the exhibition yet to come. Yet its content communicates to bodies who can and cannot attend. To those who attend we ask what their attendance means. To those who cannot attend we protect their rights. We produce an economy of exchange just for this. A quiet economy. A smugglers economy, where [performative] transactions are made without sight, where our diasporic histories are treated as instigators of common convergences and our differences considered with care. This is why an exhibition may not come into being in anything other than a proposal. For the proposal holds an intensity that articulates the voice within the minor. And the proposal opens the opportunity for conversation, which is where we work. The conversation returns us to the social space, which for you and I has been contested at one point or another, and are spaces we have been uprooted from, may be uprooted from again, and for which we constantly need to affirm our right to remain, should we so wish. Our right to produce exhibitions and to continuously set in motion exhibitions that relate to one another is a matter of our expressing the right to choose to have the right to refuse to be seen, or to be public, as it means, for us, a constant process that happens in duress over time. Our right to exhibit is a question of citizenship, for it asks who has the right to be seen. It is for this same reason that we ask, who has the right to steal? For we ask the institution if they are prepared to reckon with the history of theft that remains within their own histories, and if they are prepared to reveal the objects [materials] that articulate this.

Our work, if we must call it work, is to unravel these rights from *within*. In approaching the within we rework constitutions both our own and the spaces we work with. We produce a constitutional criticality. We become termites who sing, cracks in walls, unseen, unheard, stating how our removal only papers over a history of violence undealt with.

As this occurs the lament refuses terminus. It, like us, is continuous. And in this continuity the border reveals its excesses. As the labourers of lament, committed to the [performative] transactions within this economy, we commit to maintaining these excesses whatever they may be. Yet each individual's excesses differ, for each diasporic existence encounters materials through their own ripples. As the coffee brings me into relation with Darwish and my mother and my friend, so too may a rose bring a friend closer to their relations, or the sound of sand for another. It is only when we bring these materials into our discursive spaces that they find their own means of expression.

Materials lament too. They speak. Our work is not to add meaning, but to allow meaning to appear. To invite meaning. To gift meaning.

I write to you. The word is how I invite meaning. For I inherited the word. I prepare recipes for you, for I inherited these meals. I serve coffee to you, for I inherited the act of hosting, I produce exhibitions for I inherited the stage. There is no discord in the means by which this passes through me. These materials are materials of my lament, a lament I inherited.

And perhaps, this asks, is all lament an inheritance we cannot refuse? Is this why it is the language of the border? In that it too appears at the intersection of one life and another. Is the lament a vibration that exists within the lives of bodies who are seeking to get *within*?

And yet this *within* remains indistinct. No-one can articulate its architecture or its shape. It is a void. It does not need nor demand clarity of shape. Rather it asks only that we attempt to remain there for as long as possible if we so wish.

Working *within*. Thinking *within*. Passing *within*.

Being *within* becomes a resource for those who know how to get there and be there. An archive without walls. A history of the spirit. A litany of gifts. In the space of *within* memory and grief congeal and turn into a robust consciousness. To be *within* is a diasporic ontology. It is how we remain and refuse; it is where we let the lament make its method apparent to us.

But now it is late, and I cannot conclude something that I have stated is continuous. Today, tomorrow, and the next, I will still write to you. Still prepare recipes. Still converse. Still maintain spaces. Still listen for the echoes of materials. Distance is not conclusive. Herein lies the potential of lament. A hospitable vehicle for our resonances to move.

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